

THE
Country-Parson's
ADVICE
TO HIS
PARISHIONERS.

In Two PARTS.

- I. Containing a Plain and Serious
EXHORTATION to a Religious and
Virtuous LIFE.
- II. General DIRECTIONS how to
LIVE accordingly.
-

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A.D. 1568

TO HIS

MAYOR

IN THE

City of London

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A SERIOUS
EXHORTATION
TO A

Religious and Virtuous LIFE.

The Introduction.

I Design, (dear Brother) thro' God's Grace, to give thee the best Assistance I can, in a Religious and Virtuous Life; to direct thee how to live to God's Glory, and to attain that perfect and happy Estate, which God hath made thee capable of, and which thy Saviour desires to bring thee to, by that holy Religion which thou dost profess. But before thou dost accept of my Assistance and Direction, it may be thou wilt desire to know, whether there be any Reason why thou shouldest apply thy self to live such a Life, and whether thou mayst not as prudently let it alone, and live as the most of thy Neighbours do; and therefore I desire that thou wouldest do me, and thy self, the kindness, seriously to consider the following Things.

CHAP.

C H A P. I.

Containing the first Argument to a Holy Life, viz. That being God's Creatures we ought to be subject to God, as all other Creatures are; to observe the Laws of our Creation, and consult the Honour and Dignity of our Natures.

FOasmuch as thou knowest that thou art God's Creature, and didst receive thy Being and Life from him, and subsistest altogether in him, thou must necessarily acknowledge that thou art, and oughtest to be at his Disposal, and to live, and act according to his Intention, and the End for which thou wast made. As thou art God's Creature, and hast no other Being than what thou hast received from him, so thou canst have no Power nor End, but what he who gave thee thy Being, giveth, and prescribeth to thee. This is a Law which all the Creatures of God are, and must necessarily be subject to, and thou seest that all the inferior Creatures do act according to it: They do employ themselves according to the Capacity of their Being, in that for which God created them, and tend directly to the End for which they were created and ordained; and therefore thou canst not but know, that thou oughtest to do so likewise, and that, for whatever End thou wast created, thou art constantly to intend and prosecute the same in thy whole Life. Couldst thou thy self give Life and Being to any thing, thou wouldest and mightest justly expect the same from it. And therefore I must beseech thee to consider why, and for

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for what End, God gave thee thy Being: For That thou art indispensably obliged to intend and prosecute. Now thou art sensible, that thou hast an excellent Being, and that the other Creatures, which thou beholdest in the World, are much inferior to thee. Thou hast an Understanding, and by that the Knowledge of things, which they have not, and cannot have, *viz.* of things Spiritual and Immaterial: Thou hast a Will free to chuse, or refuse, to do, or not to do, according to the direction of thy Understanding, without Coaction or Compulsion; whereas they act necessarily, and without any such Liberty: Thou hast Desires implanted in thy Soul after things which they have no Apprehension of; and art capable of some Enjoyments which they are altogether incapable of: To what End then hadst thou this excellent Being bestowed upon thee, and what is it that thou art to aim at, to desire, and endeavour whilst thou art in the World? Canst thou think, when thou considerest thy own Faculties, and Capacities, that thou wast made meerly to get a little Money, by carking and caring, by toiling and sweating, by plotting and contriving? A poor Business, surely for such an excellent Creature to be employed about! and thou debasest thy self extremely, and reproachest thy Maker, if thou dost imagine it. But, Brother, thou knowest that Money is not a thing desirable for it self, but for use, as it procures Necessaries for the Belly and the Back, and things grateful and pleasing to sensual Appetites and Desires; and therefore thou must enquire further, whether thou wast made only to eat and drink, and having made Provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof: And I beseech thee, Brother, tell me, whether this will not sink

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thee down into the Condition of the Beasts, and Birds, and reflect as injuriously upon thy Maker ; for certainly, they are as capable of such Gratifications and Satisfactions as thou art, notwithstanding thy excellent Spirit and better Capacities : They can feast as gustfully upon those Provisions that God hath made for them, as thou canst do, and sing as merrily. Thou dost not cloath thy Servant in Purple, and fine Linnen, to send him to the Plough ; nor bring up thy Child in all the polite Learning of the World, on purpose to employ him in feeding Hogs : And if thou shouldest see thy Neighbour act so foolishly, thou wouldest not fail to deride him for it. And wilt thou dare to impute the like Folly to the wise Creator, and the Governor of the World, and believe that he hath given thee an immortal Spirit, to be imployed only about the Objects of Sense, to the End that thou mayst live like the Beasts that perish ? Far be it from thee. Thou art made certainly for a much better and nobler End than they were ; and the Consideration of the Powers and Capacities of thy Soul, would lead thee to the knowledge of it, though God had given thee no other means of knowing it. Thou art capable of knowing thy Creator, of contemplating his infinite Perfections, of admiring, and praising, and loving what thou knowest. Though thou livest in the World, yet thou canst have thy Mind in Heaven, and dwell with God by Desire and Love ; and whilst thou dost feast thy Senses upon these material and perishing Things, thou canst feast thy Spirit much more upon the never-failing Wisdom and Goodness of the Maker of all things. Thou knowest him to be the supreme Good, and that every thing is good
and

to a Religious and Virtuous Life. 5

and happy only so far as it partakes of his Goodness and Felicity; and thou knowest that there can be no nearer, no other way to perfect Happiness, than to give up thy self wholly to him, to submit to his Government and Conduct, to do whatever he will have thee to do, to suffer all that he will lay upon thee, to have thine Eye always upon him, to delight thy self in him; to desire and hope more fully and perfectly to know him, and enjoy him. These things thou knowest, or mayest know, and thou art capable of acting according to thy knowledge: Thou canst give thy self to God, thou canst submit thy self to him, thou canst serve him, and obey him with a chearful and active Service, thou canst praise, and magnify him, and rely altogether upon him; and hope and long for a compleat Fruition of him. Behold then, What thou wast made to do, and observe how thou art to imploy thy self in the World. Here is thy End, and this is thy Work, a Work worthy of so excellent a Creature; it is called, in one Word, to serve God; and whatsoever thou dost, or endeavourest to do, or bestowest thy time in, that is contrary or impertinent to this End, is but Vanity and Folly, meer lost Labour, and will bring forth no Fruit, but Grief and Sorrow, Shame and Confusion; for that it is not the Work that we came into the World to do. We were made Men, *that is*, in the Image of God, not to live like Beasts, no, nor to please our selves in any way; but to serve, and please, and glorify God here, and to possess and enjoy him for ever hereafter. Judge then, good Brother, whether thou hast not reason to serve God with all thy Might in a holy and virtuous Life.

C H A P. II.

*Containing a second Argument to a Holy Life,
from those Obligations which our Profession
of Christianity lays on us.*

FOrasmuch as thou dost profess thy self a Christian, I must desire thee to consider seriously, what that Christianity is which thou dost profess, and what the Profession of it doth oblige or bind thee to. To this purpose, I beseech thee to reflect upon thy Baptism, and to call to mind what was then transacted and done between God and thy Soul, or (which is all one) between God and the Church in thy Behalf. Now, in that Holy Ceremony thou wast dedicated to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and, renouncing the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, didst promise and vow Obedience to all his Commandments; and God did mercifully accept of thy Abrenuntiation and Dedication; and did take thee into his House and Family, that Family which Christ did purchase with his Blood, and which he governs by his Spirit, and for which he hath prepared everlasting Bliss and Glory. Thou wast then taken off that rotten and corrupt Stock of the first and earthly *Adam*, which brings forth Fruit only to Death and Destruction, and grafted into the living Stock of the second and Spiritual *Adam*, which fructifies to everlasting Glory and Happiness. Thou didst renounce that Principle of Sin and Death, which thou didst derive from thy first Parents, and whatever is grateful and pleasing to it; and giving up thy self to God, thou wast received by him, and given to his Son Jesus Christ, who

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who took possession of thee by his Spirit, which is a Principle of new Life in thee. That all this is done in Baptism, not in Ceremony, and by way of Representation only, but in Deed, and in real Effect, is plain enough in the Scriptures. Thou mayst look into the following Places for thy Satisfaction. Our Blessed Saviour tells us, *John 15. v. 5. I am the Vine and ye are the Branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, bringeth forth much Fruit.* Now this Abiding in him, doth presuppose our Ingrafting into him: And this was done in our Baptism; for then, as the Apostle St. Paul tells us, *1 Cor. 12. v. 13. We are baptized by one Spirit into one Body; and that Body is the Body of Christ,* as you will see *v. 27. of the same Chapter: And therefore we are said in Baptism to put on Christ, Gal. 3. v. 27,* and in the 6th Chapter to the Romans, we are said *to be planted together (viz. by Baptism) in the likeness of Christ's Death, v. 5;* and by this the same Apostle tells us, *That we are saved, Titus 3. v. 5. According to his Mercy he saved us, by the Washing of Regeneration, and Renewing of the Holy Ghost.* And that we cannot (ordinarily) be saved without this Washing and Renewing, our Blessed Saviour told *Nicodemus, John 3. v. 5. Except a Man be regenerated of Water, and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.* These Places of Scripture being understood in that Sense which the first and best Christians did take them in, do teach us all that which I said before concerning Baptism; and the Church whereto we do belong, understanding them accordingly, doth teach us the same, both in the Office of Baptism, and the Catechism; telling us, that in Baptism we are regenerated, and made Members of Christ,

and Inheritors of (that is, we have a Right thereby to inherit) *the Kingdom of Heaven*. Thou seeest then (dear Brother) what thou art, as thou art a Christian, and what thou professest thy self to be. Thou art separated from the World, dedicated and consecrated to God, united to Christ Jesus, and in him, and by him a Child of God, and an Heir of everlasting Life. Thou art not thy own (therefore) but God's, and thou art his, not only by Creation, but by Redemption and Purchase, by thy own Act, and voluntary Resignation of thy self to him, by Covenant and Promise, by a real Incorporation into the Body of Christ, and the Participation of his Spirit. This is an honourable and a happy Estate, and it was a wonderful Grace, that such a worthless rebellious Creature should ever be admitted into it. And need I now tell thee (Brother) what kind of Life such a Man as thou art, and in such an Estate, ought to live? It is a Rule in Nature, (thou knowest) that such as a Being is, such will be the Actions and Operations of it; and therefore it is necessary that thy Life and Actions be agreeable to thy Being and State, as thou art a Christian; and since the Estate of a Christian is an holy and divine Estate, it is necessary that thy Life and Actions be Holy and Divine, as thy State is. Art thou a Member of Christ, ingrafted into his Body, and quickened by his Spirit? And oughtest thou not to be conformable to Christ, and to live the Life of Christ? Art thou a Child of God? And oughtest thou not to be led by the Spirit of God, [*Rom. 8. v. 14.*] and to be a Follower or Imitator of God (as the Apostle saith, *Ephes. 5. v. 1.*) in Love and Purity? Art thou an Heir of Heaven? (for all the Children of God are Heirs, *Rom. 8. v. 17.*) and ought

ought not thy *Conversation* to be in Heaven? Ought not thy Thoughts and Desires to be upon thine *Inheritance*; and thy Heart and Life to be such as may render thee *meet to be a Partaker* of it? *Coloss. 1. v. 12.* Wouldst not thou wonder to see the pleasant Vine degenerate into a sorry Thistle, and the fruitful Olive into an unprofitable Bramble? And what dost thou less, if being a Christian thou dost live like a Heathen; if being in the Spirit thou dost walk after the Flesh, and mind the things of the Flesh? Was it not a most dreadful Curse that drove the great King *Nebuchadnezzar* out of his stately Palace into the Fields, amongst the Beasts, to eat Grass like the Oxen, *Dan 4.*? And dost not thou make his Curse to be thy own Choice, when being a Child of God, an Heir of the Kingdom of Heaven, which is more than to be Emperor of the whole Earth, thou dost set thy Heart upon this Dunghill-World, and hast no Esteem or Relish of heavenly Things? If with prophane *Esau*, thou sellest thy Birth-right for a Mess of Pottage, and despising thy Eternal Inheritance, desirest to have thy Portion only in this Life? The Reason of all this is plain enough, and, I hope, will be readily acknowledged by thee: But however, it is impossible but thou must confess, that thou art obliged to perform thy Promises, and to pay thy Vows unto the Most High; and that, since thou hast given up thy self to God, thou hast not the least Power over thy self, but oughtest to live altogether to him. If thou hast an ill Opinion of thy Neighbour, and that justly, when he is not as good as his Word to thee, how canst thou but condemn thy self, when thou breakest thy Vows unto the Lord? And if, when any prophane Thing has been offered to God, and con-

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secrated by Prayer, and Ceremonies, and serves to Holy and Divine Administrations, thou esteemest it as separated from common Use; and callest it Sacrilege and Prophaness to imploy it in common Ways; art not thou thy self guilty of the highest Sacrilege, when, being dedicated and consecrated to God by Baptism, thou dost withdraw thy self from him, and never imployest thy self for him, nor referrest thy self unto him? The Apostle tells us, That we are not our own, because we are bought with a Price, (i. e. the Blood of the Son of God) 1 Cor. 6. v. 19, 20. and I add to it, because we have likewise given up our selves to him that bought us; and therefore there is the greatest Reason that we should glorify him in our Bodies, and our Spirits, which are God's. It was the Saying of a devout Man, many Years ago, "*That it had been better for us never to have been, than to dwell in our selves, and to our selves;*" and we shall find it too true one Day, if, forgetting our State and Profession, and Obligation as we are Christians, we do live to our selves, and not to God. But this leads to a third Consideration, viz.

CHAP. III.

Containing a third Argument to a Holy Life, from the general Consideration of a future Judgment.

CONSIDER, that there will a time come, when thou must give an exact Account of thy Life and Actions; and it shall be known to all the World, how

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how thou hast demeaned thy self, both as a Man, and Christian. Dear Brother, believest thou the Scriptures? I know thou dost, and thou hast the greatest Reason in the World to do so. Observe therefore what they tell thee concerning that Account which thou art to make; and then consider whether there be not reason enough why thou shouldst be careful to lead a Virtuous and Holy Life. It is a mighty Encouragement indeed to us in well-doing, that our Saviour is to be our Judge; for he, who loved his Enemies so as to die for them, will never forget the good Works of those whom he does *call his Friends*, John 15. v. 14. But lest any of us should be so unwise, as to make this an Argument for a licentious and careless Way of living, promising our selves much Favour from him, and an easy Account at the Day of Judgment; he hath told us frequently, that he purposes to proceed severely with us, and to shew no Favour but what may consist with the exactest Justice. And it well deserves our observation, that though he was the mildest and mercifullest Person alive, and expressed the greatest Tendernefs and Love to sinful Men that ever was, insomuch that his Enemies cast it as a Reproach upon him, *that he was a Friend to Publicans and Sinners*; yet he never spake of the Day of Judgment, but with great Severity; nor of himself, as the Judge of the World, but in such Words as altogether exclude that fond partiality which wicked Men expect from him at that Day. Thus in one place he represents himself to be an austere and hard Man, and tells us, *That he expects to reap where he did not sow, and to gather where he did not straw*; i. e. He will expect and require from us (when he comes to judge us) an Increase of those

those Talents which he hath entrusted us with ; and if we have not improved them to his advantage, he will *first take them away from us, and then cast us into a Prison of Darknes, where shall be Weeping and Gnyshing of Teeth*, Matth. 25. v. 26, 27. and we may note there, that it is with the *unprofitable Servant*, the Servant that brought him no Increase, that he will deal so severely ; and therefore, how rigorously may we believe he will deal with those that do mispend his Talents, and make no use of them, but to his Dishonour ? In the same Chapter, likewise, we find him no less severe to five foolish Virgins, whom he shuts for ever out of Heaven, *because they had no Oyl with their Lamps, and were not ready exactly at the Hour (though it was Midnight) to meet the Bridegroom*, v. 12. In another place, he condemns to everlasting misery, not only those who accept not his Invitation to his Marriage-Feast, *but those likewise that came to it without Wedding-Garments*, Matth. 22. v. 12, 13. and in the 7th Chapter of the same Gospel he declares, *That this shall be the Portion of all the Workers of Iniquity, though they have called him Lord, and prophesied in his Name, and cast out Devils, and done many wonderful Works*, v. 22, 23. that is, though they have professed themselves his Disciples and Servants, and done some things which the World accounts great, for his Honour, yet he will not own them ; and though they make fair Pleas for themselves, and beg his Mercy and Favour with the greatest Earnestness and Importunity, yet he will have no regard unto them, but banish them for ever from him. All this, and much more than this, hath our Blessed Saviour told us by way of Parable ; and he

he hath no where encouraged us to hope for any thing more easy and favourable, when he speaks plainly of it, and without a Parable. He hath let us know in plain Words, that he will judge our Works, nay, our very Words also, and require an Account, not only of our filthy and ungodly Speeches, *but of our idle, our vain and unprofitable Discourses likewise*, Matth. 12. v. 36. Nay farther, he hath told us, That the *very Thoughts and Purposes of our Hearts shall be brought into Judgment; the offending Eye, the lustful, adulterous Eye may cause the whole Body to be cast into Hell; and that a causeless Anger entertained against our Brethren*, though it shew itself neither by Words, nor Deeds, *will bring us into Danger of Condemnation*, Matth. 5. v. 22, 23. Thou wilt think these hard Sayings, it may be; and yet there is somewhat more to be consider'd, which may make thee think them much harder. Might our Judgment be in private, and our Accounts be made between God and our selves only, we might perhaps, notwithstanding all that which hath been said, look upon it as tolerable. But alas! we are told, that it must be publick, (without any regard to our modesty) and before all the World; that *the very Secrets of our Hearts shall be disclosed before Men and Angels; that the hidden things of Darknes shall be brought to Light* (as one tells us who well knew the Mind of Christ, 1 Cor. 4. v. 5.) and *all our Counsels be made manifest*. And further, that this shall be at a time when (perhaps) we did not look for it, at *Midnight*, or at *Cock-crowing*; that we may be hurried away to Christ's Judgment-Seat, before we can trim our Lamps, or make ready our Accounts, or think what Course to take to approve our selves to our Judge

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Judge and Lord. *We may be Eating and Drinking, or Buying and Selling, or Planting and Building (as the People were in the Old World when the Flood came and swept them all away) and the Son of Man shall be revealed from Heaven, and we shall be taken as in a Snare; we shall not be able to flee away from him, nor to stand before him, because we are not prepared, and ready for him. See Luke 17. v. 26, 27, 28. Nay yet further, his Coming, we are told, will be with so much Majesty and Glory, there shall so many dreadful things go before it, and so much Terror accompany it, that we shall be utterly confounded, and not able to lift up our Heads, if clear and good Consciences, and just and right Accounts prepared, and made ready before-hand, do not give us some Confidence and Assurance before him: The Heavens shall pass away with a great Noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat, and the Earth, and all the Works that are therein shall be burnt up, 2 Pet. 3. v. 10. and then shall the Lord Jesus descend from Heaven with a Shout, with the Voice of the Archangel, and the Trump of God, 1 Thess. 4. v. 16. and all the Nations and Kindreds of the Earth, and those that are in their Graves shall hear his Voice, John 5. v. 28. and behold his Glory, the Glory of the King of Kings, and of the Lord of Lords, who treadeth the Winepress of the Fierceness and Wrath of Almighty God, Rev. 19. v. 15, and 16. O dear Christian Brother! what wilt thou do in that Day? And what shall I do who now ask thee the Question? How shall we be able to bear the Sight of so great Majesty and Glory? How shall we have the Courage to appear before it? What Dread, what Horror will possess our Souls? What Confusion will*

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will cover our Faces? How shall we tremble, when we think of our Trial before that impartial and dreadful Bar? And how will our Hearts sink within us, when we are called to answer for our selves? O Brother! What will a good Conscience, thinkest thou, be worth at that Day? What wouldest thou then give for a pure and unspotted Life, to present before the just Judge of Heaven and Earth, for as great a number of good Works, as thou hast of Sins, and Rebellions, and Provocations? Whatever thou thinkest of a good Life now, believe it, thou wilt then think well of it; and happy, thrice happy shalt thou be, if thy own Heart condemn thee not of Wickedness and Impiety. Whether it will do so or not, I am not able to tell thee; but this I can assure thee, that no Tongue is able to express the Amazement, the Consternation, the Horror and Anguish, the Perplexity that shall possess and overwhelm thee, if it do condemn thee. Thou wilt not know what Course to take, which way to look, nor whither to betake thy self. To avoid the Judgment will be impossible, and to bear it thou wilt not be able. If thou callest for Mercy, thou shalt find none; if thou desirest Death, thy Desire will not be granted; if thou callest to the Hills to cover thee, they shall be deaf unto thee: All Hope, all Comfort shall utterly forsake thee, and thou must stand at the dreadful Tribunal as a desperate and helpless Wretch, till thou hearest that dreadful and irrevocable Sentence, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* And now, Brother, tell me, I beseech thee, what Thoughts thou hast of a Holy Life? Is there any reason why thou shouldest be careful to lead such a Life, or not? Dost thou think that
thou

thou canst avoid this dreadful Account we have
 spoken of? Or dost thou hope, that an Account
 made according to that careless and carnal way
 of living which we see most Men live, will pass at
 that just Tribunal, and be accepted of as good?
 Canst thou have the Face to make before God and
 all the World, such a Declaration as this? "God
 "gave me an excellent Being, I acknowledge, and
 "appointed me an excellent End; but I neither
 "consider'd the one, nor thought upon the other:
 "God made me capable to know him, to love him,
 "and worship and serve him; and I was frequent-
 "ly told, that the main Business of my Life was to
 "do thus; but this I never intended nor design'd;
 "or if I did, it was but by the by, and when I had
 "nothing else to do. I cannot deny but I was capable
 "of bringing my Maker a great Increase of Glory,
 "by the Use and Improvement of those excellent
 "Faculties he bestow'd upon me; but the Lusts
 "and Appetites of the Flesh, and the Pleasures of
 "providing for, and satisfying them, made me
 "forget my self, and the Honour of him that made
 "me. I must needs acknowledge likewise, that
 "it was not ordinary Grace which called me
 "to the Knowledge of Christ, and that I thought
 "my self partaker of no little Honour and Advan-
 "tage by it; but whether my Christianity laid any
 "other Obligations upon me than the bearing the
 "Name of a Christian, I could never find time
 "to consider, nor think it worth while to enquire:
 "I thought better of my self indeed than of other
 "Men, for my being a Christian; but that I have
 "lived better than they; that I have been more
 "mindful of God, and more profitable to Men, I
 "am not able to say: I have talked much of Hea-
 "ven,

“ven, but I ever loved the World before it; and
“though I professed great Love to Christ, yet my
“main Business has always been to please my self.”
I know thou wilt cry out upon this as most absurd
and unreasonable, and conclude it impossible any
Person should find Mercy at that great Day, that
can speak nothing better for himself; and yet I
defy all our common careless Christians, to make
any better Plea for themselves, or to give any Ac-
count of themselves, and those Talents that God
hath intrusted them with, which may be judged
more tolerable, or more likely to be accepted.
Hast thou a Son or Servant, whom thou hast be-
stowed great Cost upon, to fit him for doing thee
some considerable and important Service? And
hast thou committed it to his Care and Charge,
given him a competent Time, and furnished him
with all Necessaries and Requisites for the doing
it; and that Son or Servant, after his Time ex-
pired, returns to give thee such an Account as
this? “So much of my Time I spent in eating
“and drinking, in revelling and rioting, in sing-
“ing and dancing, in courting and sporting, about
“which all my Thoughts and all my Care were
“wholly taken up; and as for the great Business
“thou commandest me to do, I never thought
“upon it, or not till it was too late, when I had
“neither Time, nor other Requisites remaining
“to effect it.” Would not such a Son or Servant
vex thee to the Heart? And wouldest not thou
think him worthy of the greatest Shame and Punish-
ment? Remember, Brother, that it will be thy own
Case, if neglecting the great End of thy Life and
Being, and the indispensable Obligations of thy
most Holy Religion, thou canst only reckon at
the

the great Day thy getting of Money, or thy spending it to the Satisfaction of thy beastly Lusts and Apperites. But this shall lead me to another Consideration, viz.

C H A P. IV.

*Containing a fourth Argument to a Holy Life,
The Consideration of the future Punishments
of wicked Men, viz. That their Torments
are Extreme and Intolerable, without Ceasing
and without End.*

COnsider the Punishments which Almighty God hath prepared for those unfaithful Men, who will not be able to stand in that Judgment, but must fall under the dreadful Sentence of Condemnation. And that thou mayst know how great those Punishments will be, thou wilt do well to call to mind what Punishments God hath often inflicted upon wicked Men in this World. I omit the effects of *Adam's Sin* and Disobedience, which the whole World still labours under, as also the Fruits of our own Sins, which perhaps we have more than once smarted for: Let it be remembered how God destroyed all Mankind except eight Persons, with a Flood of Water for their Sins, *Gen. 7.* How he overthrew five Cities with Fire and Brimstone for their Filthiness and Impiety, *Gen. 19.* How he destroyed his own People, for whom he had wrought many Wonders in the Wilderness, when they would not obey his Voice, *Causing three and twenty thousand of them to fall in one Day,*

to a Religious and Virtuous Life. 19

Day, 1 Cor. 10. v. 8. How he gave Commandment utterly to destroy the *Amalekites*, and not to spare their sucking Children, for a Sin committed by their Fathers four hundred Years before ; and in a Word, how he gave up his own once beloved People, and their City, and Country, to the most lamentable Ruin and Desolation that ever was ; and how their Posterity are scattered to this Day over the Face of the whole Earth, and hated of all People, bearing the Sin and Curse of their Forefathers, *His Blood be upon us, and our Children*, Matth. 27. v. 25. These are great Demonstrations of God's Hatred against Sin, and from these we do learn, That those Punishments which are appointed for wicked Men in another World, must needs be very grievous, and such as will make them extreamly miserable. For, as the Scriptures tell us, This is the time of God's *Patience, and Forbearance, and Goodness towards Sinners*, Rom. 2. v. 4. And if in this time he shews so much Severity, how severe may we believe he will be, when this Time of his Goodness is ended, and when the Day of his Wrath, as the Scripture calls it, is come ; that Day of Justice without Mercy, of Vengeance without Pity, of Execution without further Patience and Forbearance : When all the Wrath that wicked Men have deserved, and have treasured up against themselves, shall fall upon their guilty Souls, and God shall as designedly magnify his impartial Justice in their Torment and Misery, as he will magnify his Mercy and Goodness in the Glory and Felicity of his faithful Servants ? But we have yet a better way of learning how great the Punishments of the Damned shall be, and that is, by considering what the

the Scriptures have told us in plain Words concerning them; they are such Punishments; our Blessed Saviour tells us, as *are prepared for the Devil and his Angels*, Matth. 25. v. 41. That is, for the very worst of Beings, for the greatest Rebels against Heaven, and the most irreconcilable Adversaries to all manner of Goodness; and therefore, we may be sure that they are as great as we can imagine them to be, not to say, that they are as great as an Almighty God can make them. They are Punishments by Fire, as he also tells us, which is the most Raging, the most Devouring and Tormenting thing we know in the World: And that Fire is represented to be such as our Nature does most abhor, and must needs be most insufferable, *viz. A Fire with Brimstone*, the Stench of which is as intolerable as the Heat, and which suffocates as well as consumes, *Rev. 21. v. 8.* Of this Fire, we are told likewise, *There is a Bottomless Lake or Pit*, *Rev. 20. v. 3.* into which there shall never enter the least Light, *The very Blackness of Darknes*, as St. *Jude's* Expressions are, *v. 13.* lying upon it *for ever*. In this Lake, we are told, the Damned shall be close Prisoners, *tbound Hand and Foot*, Matth. 22. v. 13. without possibility of escaping, or so much as removing from one place to another for the gaining of the least Ease; and in this Prison we are told, the Torments will be such as will cause *Weeping*, and *Wailing*, and *Gnashing of Teeth*, nay, *Yellings*, and *Howlings*, and *Shriekings*, *Like the Shrieking of the Children frying in the Fire in the Valley of Hinnom*, 2 Kings 23, v. 10. which the Word used by our Blessed Saviour for Hell, *Matth. 5.*

to a Religious and Virtuous Life. 21

v. 29, 30. doth imply; and these Torments, and Wailings, and Heart-breaking Cries shall continue, not for a Month, or a Year, or an Age, but for ever and ever. *The Fire shall never be quenched*, Mark 9, v. 44. *The Smoak of their Torment is ever to ascend*, Rev. 14. v. 10, 11. and they shall find no Rest Night nor Day. This is a little, and but a little of what the Scripture tells us of the Punishments of the Damned; but in this little there are so many dreadful things implied, that he must be bold and hardened even to a Wonder, that is not affrighted with them. For,

1. It is plain, that the Punishments are such as will Torment the whole Man, Body and Soul, with all their Faculties and Powers, and that in the extreamest Manner. There shall not be a Member of the Body, nor any Faculty in the Soul, but shall have its Torment in one and the same Instant; and that Torment shall be so great that no Words can express it, nor Heart can conceive it. How can it be otherwise, dost thou think, in a Lake of Fire and Brimstone? What Member of the Body will not be scorched? What Sense will not be afflicted? What Faculty will not be tormented? The lascivious Eyes will be plagued with Darkness, and the ugly and fearful Sight of Devils and damned Spirits: The nice Smell, with the loathsome Stench of Brimstone, and all the most abominable Filthiness: The delicate Ears, with the Shrieks and Howlings of tormenting, and tormented Wretches: The dainty Taste, with the most ravenous Hunger and Thrift; and all the sensible Parts, with burning and devouring Fire. The Imagination will have its Torment,

ment, by the Apprehension of present Pains, and of those that are to come: The Memory by its Remembrance of Pleasures past and gone, and never to return again: The Understanding, by the Consideration of the Happiness lost, and the Misery now come on. And if there be any other Part which can be tormented, it shall have its Torment with no more Favour than the rest. Oh! Dear Christian Brother, what sad and dreadful Things are these? And how unspeakably miserable must those be who must endure them? And yet this is not all; For it is certain in the second Place,

2. That these Torments shall always continue without any the least Intermission or Decrease, and those that suffer them shall never find the least Ease, nor Help, nor Comfort; no, not for one Minute. This is no more than is implied in the Places of Scripture before mentioned; the Fire will be always burning, the Smoak ever ascending, so that there shall be no Rest Day nor Night, and those that are bound Hand and Foot will not be able to escape, or to resist or strive against the Torments; but must lye still, and suffer all. Thus it was with the rich Man, of whom our Blessed Saviour tells us, *Luke 16.* that being in Hell, tormented with the Fire which shall not be quenched, he made this Request to *Abraham, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the Tip of his Finger in Water and cool my Tongue, for I am tormented in this Flame, v. 24.* What smaller Request could he possibly make? He desired not a Cup of Water, no, nor as much as *Lazarus* might have held in the Palm of his Hand, nor yet so much as might have stuck to his whole

whole Finger: He only desired a Drop from the very Tip of it, or not so much, only that he would *touch his Tongue with the Tip of his Finger* a little moistned and cooled with Water; and yet this small Request would not be granted him; that little, that very little Ease, which so small a Favour would have given him, was denied him. Which sad Story plainly shews us, that the Torments of the Wicked have no Intermision, nor Decrease; and that those who suffer them, shall never obtain the least Help or Ease, though they want it most extreamly, and seek for it with the greatest Earnestness and Importunity. They shall be like to a Man, that is almost drown'd in the midst of the Sea, who not finding any firm Ground whereupon to set his Feet, stretches out his Hands every Way, and grasps at something with all his Might, but still in vain, because there is nothing but Water round about him: Thus will it be with those Wretches in Hell; they are drowning in a bottomless Gulf of unspeakable Miseries, and they look every Way for Help, and strive for a little Ease; but alas! to no Purpose, for there is nothing but Sorrow, and Misery, and Pain, and Horror, round about them. And thus it shall be with them, not for a little Time, for a Month, or a Year, but for ever and ever; which is a third Thing I desire thee to observe.

3. Their Pains and Torments will be endless as well as easeless; and when they have endured them without any Intermision, or Decrease, as many Years, nay Ages as there are Stars in the Firmament, or Sands upon the Sea-shore, they shall still be to endure them, in the very same Manner, as many more; as many more did I say? yea, ten thou-

thousand Times more ; they shall endure them as long as there is a Just and Holy God to punish them, that is, to eternal Ages. This is but what God himself hath told us in plain Words ; for thus shall the sad Sentence run at the great Day, *Depart from me, ye Cursed, into everlasting Fire* ; and the Execution will be accordingly, as we are told, Matth. 25. the last v. *The Wicked shall go into Everlasting Punishment*, into Punishment that shall be as lasting as the Rewards of the Righteous, which will be as lasting as God himself.

These are dreadful Considerations, my dear Christian Brother, and he must be a strange kind of Man indeed, and have a Heart harder than the Adamant, that is not mightily affected with them. There are but few Men so hardy as to think upon the Plagues, and Judgments of Almighty God upon sinful Men in this World, without some Fear, especially when they think of them as hanging over their own Heads, and apprehend themselves to be in danger of them ; and how then can they chuse but tremble at those of another World, which are infinitely more dreadful than the worst of these ? The Evils of this World are particular Evils, they afflict but one, or some few Parts at once ; one Disease seizes upon one Part, and another upon another Part ; in one Disease one Sense is pained, and in another, another Sense ; but never are all the Parts and all the Senses, at one and the same Time under Torment and Pain. In this World there is no Evil so great, but it hath its Decreases and Changes, and therefore no Man can be so miserable but he will sometimes have some Respite and Ease : And let the Evil be never so sharp and pressing, yet the Comfort of Hope will not be wanting,

ing, and the Foresight of a certain End will be a great Relief: And yet notwithstanding this, we many Times think the Evils of this World to be intolerable; and, as sweet a Thing as Life is to us, we wish for Death to deliver us from them. O how intolerable then must the Torments of the other World be, which spare no Part, or Faculty of Body or Soul, which give not the least Ease, nor admit of the least Decrease, no not for one Minute; which exclude all Hope of an End, and overwhelm the Soul to utter Despair of the least Remedy! Let our Charity lead us sometimes to visit a poor sick Creature, and let us observe what Pains and Agonies he endures for one Night: Mark how often he tosses and tumbles from one Side of his Bed to the other; hear how he groans, and what bitter Complaints he makes; observe how he counts the Hours of the Clock, and how long he thinks each Hour to be; how passionately he wishes for the Dawning of the Day, and how tedious the Night seems unto him. This we look upon as a sad Spectacle, and if we have any Bowels in us, they cannot but melt at it, and when we consider that it may be shortly our own Case, we are very sensibly touched with it. O what shall we think then of the Condition of the Damned! How deplorable and how miserable must we needs believe that to be? To be tormented in every Member of the Body, and every Faculty of the Soul, with the sharpest and most exquisite Torments, and without the least Ease or Respite; and this not for a Night of some few Hours; but for an everlasting Night, a Night that has no Morning, and knows no Hope of any Dawning of the Day: To lie in such a Night, not upon a soft Bed (as the Sick-

Man does) but in a Bed of Flames, or a hot burning Furnace; not at liberty to turn to and fro, and to seek Ease, but bound Hand and Foot; not with the Company of compassionate Friends assisting and comforting to the best of their Power, but with the horrid Company of the damned and accursed Spirits, that shall add to their Sufferings and their Sorrows, as much as their Power and Malice can possibly do. This must be Misery in the Height, in its full Perfection, if I may so speak. Who trembles not to think of it? Who will not do any thing to escape it? Do we fear Sickness and Pain here? And do not we fear the Pains of Hell much more? Do we dread a Prison, and fly from Fetters and Chains, and hazard our very Lives to preserve our Liberty? And are we not as much afraid of that Eternal Prison, whose Gates shall never be opened when once they are shut upon us, and from which there can be no Redemption or Deliverance? Oh! dear Christian Brother, are we in our right Senses or not? Dost thou think, and do we understand what these Things mean? Do they belong to us, or are they meant only for others? Do we take them for the never-failing Truths of God, or for the Fables and Fancies of Brain-sick Men? If we understand them not, if we believe them not, why do we call our selves Christians, and make an outward Profession of that which in our Hearts we approve not of? But if we understand and believe these Things, why do we not tremble at the Thoughts of them? Why do we not bethink our selves how we may escape them? Why do we not abhor that Sin and Wickedness which will bring us to them? Why do we not apply our selves with all our Might, and all our Care, to the Practice of

of

of that Piety and Virtue, which alone, through God's Mercy, can deliver us from them? It is an amazing Thing, my Brother, that these Things should make so little Impression upon the Generality of Men, as we find they do; and, but that the Scripture tells us of a God of this World, that blinds the Eyes, and hardens the Hearts of Men, and makes them inconsiderate as Brutes, we should be at a Loss to give any Account of it. We see, that they are apprehensive enough of Evil in this World, and industrious enough to avoid it; if any Evil be great, though it be remote, they dread it; and though its Coming be uncertain, yet they take care to prevent it. But, alas! As to these unspeakable Evils and Calamities, they are stupid and inconsiderate as Blocks; the least Fear of them is full enough, and the least Care and Pains to avoid them is thought too much. Surely, Brother, there was a Time when they had greater Effects upon the World than now they have, when Men thought they could not be possessed with too great Fear of them, nor take too much Care and Pains to Escape them. Let me shew thee what a

devout Father has written concerning some Penitents he once saw in a Monastery, and then judge what Influence these Things have had heretofore upon Men, and what they ought in reason to have now. "When first I came into this Monastery (says he) "I beheld certain Things which neither the Eyes "of the Sluggard have ever seen, nor the Ears "of the Negligent heard, nor yet may it be conceiv'd in the Heart of any careless and wretched Christians. And afterwards he tells us, "how he saw many Penitents standing with their

28 A Serious Exhortation

“ Eyes fixed towards Heaven, continually calling
 “ upon Almighty God with Tears and Sighs for
 “ Pardon and Mercy: Others again he saw, that
 “ professed they were not worthy to lift up their
 “ Eyes towards Heaven, or to speak to Almighty
 “ God; and these held their Faces down towards
 “ the Ground, offering their Souls in Silence to
 “ the Mercy of God, without speaking so much
 “ as one Word, as Men that had been dumb, full
 “ of Fear and Confusion. Others were clothed
 “ in Sacks and Hair-cloth, and kneeling with their
 “ Faces bowed down to their Knees, and smiting
 “ their Foreheads oftentimes upon the Earth; did
 “ bathe the very Earth with their Tears; and
 “ those that wanted Tears did lament very griev-
 “ ously, because they wanted them. And after
 “ this, he tells us, that they had Death continually
 “ before their Eyes; and speaking one to another,
 “ they said, How think ye, Brethren? What
 “ shall become of us at the dreadful Hour? Shall
 “ the Sentence of Condemnation be revoked?
 “ Or shall our Prayers perchance come into our
 “ Lord's Ears? Or if they do, how shall they be
 “ received? And what Profit shall we receive by
 “ them? For since they proceed out of such un-
 “ clean Lips, it is to be feared, they may find but
 “ little Favour in his Sight; and much more to
 “ this Purpose. To which others would answer,
 “ as the penitent Sinners in *Nineveh*, Who knows
 “ whether the Lord will pardon us, whether he
 “ will turn himself to us, and not suffer us to pe-
 “ rish? Let us now take Courage, and persevere
 “ continually in crying unto him 'till the End;
 “ for the Lord is merciful, and will be pacified
 “ with Perseverance: Let us run, my Brethren;
 “ let

“ let us run with all Speed, and return to the Place
“ from whence we are fallen, and let us in no
“ wise pardon this filthy Flesh which hath undone
“ us ; but since it hath crucified us, let us crucify
“ it.” And then he proceeds to tell us how hard-
ly they treated their Bodies, how they watched,
and fasted, and punished themselves for their Of-
fences against God, insomuch as that their Faces
“ were like the Faces of dead Men, and their
“ very Eyes were sunk into their Heads through
“ over-much Weakness.” And after all this he
tells us how they behaved themselves when any of
their Brethren lay a dying. They compassed the
Bed of the Dying Man, and with earnest and ve-
hement Requests, with moving Countenances, and
pitiful Words they demanded of him, “ How dost
“ thou, Brother? How feelest thou thyself? What
“ Hope hast thou? What shall become of thee?
“ Hast thou obtained thy long Suit? Art thou ar-
“ rived at the Haven of thy Salvation? Hast thou
“ received any Earnest-penny of thy Security?
“ Hast thou heard any Voice within thee, which
“ said, Thy Sins be forgiven thee, or, Thy Faith
“ hath made thee whole? Or hast thou peradven-
“ ture heard any other Voice, which said unto
“ thee, The Wicked shall be turned into Hell,
“ and all the Nations that forget God? Or, Bind
“ him Hand and Foot, and cast him into utter
“ Darkness? What Answer makest thou, good
“ Brother, unto us? Tell us something we be-
“ seech thee, that we may understand by thee,
“ what is reserved for us ; for thy Suit is now
“ come to an End, and what Sentence thou shalt
“ now receive, shall never more be reversed: But
“ our Case as yet still dependeth, and looketh for

“ Sentence. To which Demands some answered :
“ Blessed be the Lord that hath not suffered us to
“ be cast into the Teeth of our Enemies : But o-
“ thers after a more doleful Manner; Miserable is
“ that Soul, that hath not fully observed his Pro-
“ fession, for now shall he well understand
“ what is prepared for him.” These, my dear
Brother, were Men that did in good earnest believe
the Truths of the Gospel concerning another
World ; and being fully persuaded that the Punish-
ments appointed for wicked Men are most intole-
rable, were as fully resolved to deliver themselves
from them, tho’ by the greatest Pains and the se-
verest Mortifications. These were Men that made
Use of that Faith, and of that Reason and Under-
standing which God hath given them ; and since
they thought it Prudence to be apprehensive of
lesser Dangers, and to prepare against more incon-
siderable Evils ; they would not, like the unruly
Horse that starts at a Bird, and runs himself into a
Precipice, be fearless of the greatest Dangers, and
suffer themselves to fall into the most insufferable
Calamities. And are not we concern’d, my Bro-
ther, to do the like, and to make the like Use of
that Faith and Reason which God hath given us ?
Does not the Fire of Hell burn as furiously now as
ever it did ? Have those everlasting Torments had
any End or Period prescribed them since that
Time ? Or are we more able to wrestle with them,
or to endure them, than they were ? Or have we
any easier Way of escaping them discovered to us,
than was known to them ? What easy Ways our
Lusts may find out, I do not know ; but sure I am
that there is but one safe and sure Way, but one
Way of God’s Appointment, which was made
known

to a Religious and Virtuous Life. 31

known to them as it is to us; and that is, the Way of serving God sincerely, and with all our Might in a Holy and Virtuous Life; which if we fail, to do, we shall as certainly as God is true, be condemned to these everlasting Torments. Judge then, dear Brother, whether we have not Reason to serve God, and whether it be not Madness to live in that careless and ungodly Way, which we see most Men do. But now because these Things may seem very severe, and possibly occasion in thee some hard Thoughts of Almighty God, I must desire thee to consider,

C H A P V.

Sect. 1. *Containing a Fifth Argument to a Holy Life, from the Consideration of those great Rewards God hath prepared for good Men in the other World, the Greatness of which may be in some Measure estimated,*
1. *From God's Kindness to good Men even in this World.* 2. *That the Reward is not proportioned to our Deserts, which are very little, but to the Goodness of God, which is infinite.* And 3. *Is designed as the most glorious Manifestation of the Divine Goodness.* And 4. *It is the Purchase of Christ's Blood, and the Reward of his Obedience and Sufferings, which are of infinite Merit.*

THE Reward, which Almighty God hath prepared in another World for those that

serve him faithfully in this, according to those Obligations that lye upon them, both as Men and Christians. And this Consideration, I doubt not, will be as Pleasant and Delightful, as the last was Sad and Dreadful; and will no less declare God's Goodness and Mercy, than that did his Justice and Severity. I presume, I need not tell thee, that such is our Condition, that no Reward of right does belong to any Services we can do; and therefore be the Reward great or little, which God hath prepar'd for us, we must acknowledge ourselves indebted to his infinite Goodness for it, and that it is on our Parts altogether undeserved; how much more then must we acknowledge ourselves indebted to his Goodness, (and what a strong Obligation should we reckon it to his Service) when the Reward he hath designed for us, is not little, like our Services; but great, great as we can imagine it to be, as our Hearts can desire it should be? To give thee a little Sight of the Greatness of this Reward, for it is not possible for thee or me to comprehend it fully, I might lead thee through a Multitude of Considerations, but I shall restrain my self to some few, which I think do deserve thy serious Regard. And

I. We cannot but acknowledge, that Almighty God is very kind to his Servants in this World, and there is not one of them can say that he serveth God for nought, as to this present Life. God hath given them many good Promises, and does give them many good Things daily according to those Promises. They have a competent Share in all the good Things of the World, and such a Blessing together with them, as makes them much more sweet and pleasant to them, than all the Possessions
of

of the Wicked. And tho' they have their Afflictions, and their Tryals, yet they have their Pleasures, and their Comforts; they have a Peace within which none can disturb, and such Joys as none can take from them, I mean, the Peace of their Consciences, and the Joys of the Holy Ghost: They are either free from all Calamities, or they have such Support under them, that they are rather Matter of Joy than Sorrow to them: God is good to them at all Times in a great Measure, but sometimes more abundantly, and in a Measure extraordinary; witness the great Things that he hath done in all Ages for them. What great Deliverances hath he often given them? What cunning Plots and Devices against them hath he brought to nought? What Wonders hath he wrought in their Behalf? And how miraculously, when they have been in their greatest Distress, has he made them to triumph over all their Enemies? So that those who have beheld it, have been constrain'd to cry out in the Words of the Psalmist, *Verily there is a Reward for the Righteous, doubtless there is a God that judgeth the Earth*, Psal. 58. v. 11. Now if God deal thus kindly with his Servants here, what Kindness dost thou think will he shew them hereafter? If whilst they are doing his Work he bestows so many good Things upon them, what may they expect from him when his Work is done? And if in the time of their Tryal they receive such great Benefits from him, what shall they receive (thinkest thou) when their Tryal is ended, and they are fully approved? If such great Things be done for their Encouragement in his Service, what great Things are designed (may we believe) for their Reward? Especially considering,

2. That

2. That the Reward which God intends for them, shall not be proportioned to the little Merit of their Services, but to his own infinite Goodness: It shall not be such as the Services do deserve, but such as becomes him to bestow. It is a *Gift*, as the Apostle tells us, *Rom. 6. v. 23.* and such a Gift as shall shew the infinite Goodness and Beneficence of the Donor. Yea,

3. It is a Gift, that is designed for to shew it. God intends the fullest Manifestation of his Goodness by it, that he may receive everlasting Praises both from Men and Angels. And how exceeding great must that Gift be? When a Prince rewards the Services of a poor Subject, he considers not so much what his loyal Subject deserves, as what becomes himself to bestow; and though the Service may be but mean, yet he must give as a Prince, largely and freely, with respect to his Honour: But if a Prince design in rewarding a Servant to shew his Magnificence and Liberality to the utmost, and to do himself the greatest Honour he can, he will give the greatest Things his Kingdom will afford; and in the noblest and most honourable Way. O how great then and how good will that Reward be, which the King of Kings, the supream Ruler and Governor of the World, will give to his faithful Servants? How little less than Infinite must that be, which will become so glorious a Majesty to bestow? Especially since he designs to manifest his Goodness and Bounty in the highest Measure; and to let all the World know, how much he deserved the Love and Service of all his Creatures. When God before the Foundation of the World did design to declare his Power, and Wisdom, and Goodness, what a World did he create?

create? What beautiful Heavens? What glittering Stars? What Elements? And in how marvellous a Manner did he unite, and compact them together? And yet he intended this vast and beautiful Building, to last but for a Time, and then to be destroyed; and he knew that the noblest of his Creatures, which he made to inhabit it, would be rebellious against him, and few of them give him his due Honour and Obedience. Imagine then what he will do, when he designs the utmost Manifestation of his Almighty Goodness, in rewarding his Faithful Servants: What a glorious Place will he make for them? What Riches and Honours will he confer upon them? Will they not be as great as his infinite Goodness can bestow, or as his infinite Wisdom can judge to be becoming it? And how incomparably great must we needs judge those to be? And yet we may consider further,

4. That this Reward designed for God's Servants, is that, which Christ hath received from his Father, to give them, for all his Pains and Tears and Sweat and Blood: That it is the Purchase of the Blood of the Son of God, and the Recompence of his Obedience to the Death. Now how great a Reward must so beloved a Son deserve by so great and perfect an Obedience? Can any Thing, how excellent soever, be thought too good for him, or too great a Recompence for his Sufferings? If, considering our own poor Services, we could not hope for such Manifestations of God's Goodness as I have spoken of, yet considering the Merits of Christ, we have no reason to doubt of them; for if infinite Goodness can admit of any Motive to shew it self to the utmost, this must needs be

be the greatest and most prevailing. And yet further, to raise our Thoughts one Degree higher, we may consider,

S E C T. 2.

Containing a Prosecution of the same Arguments, That this Reward of Good Men must be very great; Because, 5. It is not only the Reward Christ purchased for his Disciples, but that also which He obtained for Himself, as the Recompence of His Obedience and Sufferings; with a more particular Explication, wherein this Happiness consists; a Serious Expostulation with those who slight it, and the Necessity of Holiness for the obtaining of it.

5. **T**His Reward is not only as the Reward which Christ obtained for his Servants, but as the Reward which He obtained for Himself, as the very Recompence which his Heavenly Father hath given Him for his Obedience; for that it is the very same Reward which He has received, that His Servants shall enjoy, the Scripture teaches us plainly. We learn it from His own Mouth, *Matth. 25. v. 21.* where he bids the faithful Servant, that had improved his Talents to his advantage, *to Enter into the Joy of his Lord;* and one of his chosen Servants, that knew as much of this Matter as any Man ever did, hath told us the same, *Rom. 8. v. 17.* where he expressly affirms, *that we are Heirs of God,*
and

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and Co-Heirs with Christ Jesus. So that whatever Glory, or Joy, or Riches, or Honours Christ is possessed of upon the Account of his Obedience, that shall all his faithful Servants enjoy together with him. Has God exalted him for his Obedience, and given him a Kingdom above all Kingdoms? It is as certain, that his Servants shall be exalted likewise, and *reign together with him,* 2 Tim. 2. v. 12. and Rev. 22. v. 5. Is Christ ascended into the highest Heavens, and does he dwell in the Bosom of his Father? It is as certain, that he shall come one Day from Heaven, and receive all his Servants to himself, *that where he is, they may be also,* John 14. v. 3. Is that frail and mortal Body, which he had whilst he was upon Earth, and which suffered the Pains and Torments of the Cross, changed into a glorious, immortal, impassible Body? It is as certain, *that the vile Bodies of his Servants, shall be so changed likewise, and fashioned like to his glorious Body, according to the Working whereby he is able to subdue all Things to himself,* Phil. 3. v. 21. Is that Glory, which he is exalted to, that Joy and Happiness which he is possessed of, never to have an End? It is as certain, that the Glory and Felicity of his Servants shall be as lasting; *for it is an Inheritance incorruptable, undefiled, and that fadeth not away,* 1 Peter 1. v. 4. This, dear Brother, is the Reward of God's Faithful Servants; and can thy Heart conceive any Thing greater, or thy Soul wish for any Thing more? Canst thou conceive what it is to put off this vile mortal Body, with all its evil Affections, and uneasy Attendants, to be freed from all Defects and Imperfections, from all Diseases and Distempers, all Infirmities
and

and Deformities; to be like to the Angels in Heaven, and having put on Incorruption and Immortality, to shine like the Sun in the Firmament, in the Kingdom of God? Canst thou conceive what a Happiness it will be, to be with Christ, to behold the Blessed Face of that Dear Person, who does so highly Deserve of us, both upon the Score of his Infinite Perfections, and likewise upon the Account of his Inestimable Benefits? Canst thou conceive what a Happiness it will be, to *behold God Face to Face*, as St. Paul's Expressions are, *1 Cor. 13. v. 12.* or to *see him as he is*, as St. John expresses it, *1 John 3. v. 2.* that is, to have the most clear and comprehensive Knowledge of him, that finite Creatures can possibly have: To know all his Adorable Perfections, his Almighty Power, his Incomprehensible Wisdom, his Eternal Justice, his Resplendent Purity and Holiness, his Immeasurable Goodness and Love; and to feel the mighty Power of this Knowledge upon our Souls, transforming us into the Likeness of God, and uniting our Wills most perfectly to him, whereby we shall both possess God, and be possessed of him? Canst thou conceive what a Happiness it will be, for Millions of Millions of such God-like Creatures to be inseparably together, and with united Hearts and Mouths to be continually singing Songs of Praise to the great God of Love, who loved them Infinitely, and taught them to Love him again, and one another? And canst thou think how much it will add to their Happiness, to have a full and perfect Assurance, That it shall never have an End, that it shall be as lasting as 'tis great, and never know the least Diminution, or Decay? I know, Brother, that all this is far above
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the Reach of thy most raised Thoughts ; it is too great a Happiness to enter into the Heart of Man: As *Flesh and Blood cannot inherit it*, 1 Cor. 15. v. 50. that is, as Man in his present weak and corruptible Estate cannot be partaker of it, so neither can he comprehend it : When we are possessed of it, then, and not till then, shall we fully understand it. O Blessed God ! Why art thou thus good to ungrateful and unworthy Men ? Why hast thou prepared such a Happiness for those, who neither consider it, nor seek after it ? Why is such a Price put into the Hands of Fools, who have not the Hearts to make use of it, who fondly chuse to gratify their Lusts, rather than to save their Souls, and foolishly prefer the momentary Enjoyments of Sin and Folly, before a glorious and happy Immortality ? Vain and foolish Men ! How is it that you understand not your own greatest Interest ? That that Reason and Judgment which in other matters constantly attends you, does in this, which is of the greatest Moment and Concernment to you, so strangely fail you ? Does not all the World see, that you desire and seek after such things, as you apprehend to be good, and that you are more or less careful in seeking after such things, according to the Value you put upon them, and the Esteem you have for them ? For a small Estate you will take great Pains, you will run great Hazards, and suffer great Hardships ; for a great Estate you will do and suffer more ; and for a Crown, or Kingdom yet more ; and why then will you not do and suffer as much for this Glorious and Eternal Reward, which far transcends all the Riches and Glories of the World ? The Author to the
Hebrews

Hebrews tells us, That *Moses* did despise the Riches and Honours and Pleasures of the Court of *Pharaoh* for this Reward, *Heb. 11. v. 24, 25.* And that a Multitude of Wise and Holy Men have had Tryal of cruel Mockings and Scourgings, of Bonds, and Imprisonment, and have suffered patiently, yea, joyfully the worst things that Wicked Men and Devils could inflict upon them, because they had their Eyes upon it, and hoped to obtain it. And *St. Austin*, I remember, Professes, that he could be content to do or suffer any thing, yea to suffer the Torments of Hell for a time, that he might come to Heaven at last. And why is it, Brother, that we have not as great an Esteem of it? Or if we have, why do we not labour, why are we not willing to do and suffer as much for it? Dost thou think, Brother, that this Care and Pains, which I speak of, is needless as to the obtaining of it? Or may we hope for it from God's Mercy and Goodness without that strict and Holy Life, which I have spoken of? What? Dost thou believe Almighty God to be a Liar, or that he is not in earnest, when he tells thee, That *without Holiness no Man shall see Him, Heb. 12. v. 14.* Does not a Reward necessarily relate to Service, and canst thou expect the Reward though thou dost no Service? Canst thou imagine, that such a Reward, a Reward so Great and Glorious, that the very best of Men, notwithstanding the Promises of God, dare hardly presume to hope for it, shall be given to those that are Slaves to their own Lusts, and either serve God not at all, or no farther than their Lusts will give them leave? What? Is this a Reward for Apostates from God,

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for Rebels against Heaven, for those that desire it not, or value it not, but prefer the Pleasures of Sin, and the Profits of the World before it? What? Will it be the same thing as to another World, whether Men answer the End of their Creation or not? whether they dishonour their holy Profession by an unholy Life or not? whether they love God or not, whether they follow the Example of Christ or not? and in one Word, whether they be meet for Heavenly Glory and Felicity, by pure and God-like Dispositions, and the Participation of the Divine Nature; or be ever so unmeet for it, by brutish Lusts or Devilish Qualities and Dispositions? There is a vast Difference, dear Brother, between Heaven and Hell, no less than there is between Light and Darkness, between the greatest Happiness and the greatest Misery; and ought not there to be a vast Difference likewise between those that shall enjoy the one, and those that shall fall under the other? Can a holy and righteous God make so great Difference between the eternal Estates of Men, as to make some eternally happy, and others eternally miserable, who differ here one from another in little or nothing, but only in a little outward Profession, or the Observation of some few Rites and Ceremonies, or in a formal and civil Carriage or Demeanour? Surely, Brother, it is impossible that these things should enter into the Head of any sober and considering Man; and therefore thou must needs acknowledge the Necessity of living a holy Life, if thou hopest for the Heavenly Glory and Felicity; and is not the Heavenly Glory Encouragement enough for thee to do so? Will not that make thee sufficient A
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mends for the greatest Care and Pains thou canst take, for the worst Things thou canst suffer, or the greatest Hazards thou canst possibly run by it? Yes, undoubtedly it will; and therefore I leave the Exhortation of the Apostle with thee, 1 Cor. 15. v. 58. *Therefore, my beloved Brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord.* I shall add but one thing more; and I will dispatch it in few Words, *viz.*

CHAP VI.

Containing a sixth Argument to a Holy Life, from considering, That these Rewards and Punishments are not so far off, as some Persons vainly imagine; with the Conclusion of this first Part.

6. **T**HAT thou wouldest consider these Rewards and Punishments which I have spoken of, not as things at a great Distance from thee, but as they are indeed, and in truth, very near unto thee. There is but a little Part of a very short Life, of a Life which, at longest, is but a Span long, between thee and them; We have at most but some few Breaths to draw before we must pass into our Eternal State, and be either happy, or miserable, without any manner of Change or Alteration for ever. Death is continually laying his Snares for us, and has so many secret and unknown Ways to do his Work.

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Work upon us, that we live every Moment, as it were by Miracle; and it is a much stranger thing that we have lived 'till this Day, than it would be, if we should die before the Morrow. 'Tis true, we are apt to flatter our selves with Hopes of long Life; but how fond such Hopes are, the unexpected Fall of some or other, every Day about us, if nothing else will do it, may convince us. There are Thousands now in their Graves, that came no sooner into the World than we, who hoped to live as long as we can do, in it: And what are we, and what are our Hopes, that both may not be cut off within few Hours? And why may not we make our Beds in the Dust as much sooner than we expect, as they have done? Now tell me, Brother, hast thou so low an Opinion of the heavenly Glory and Felicity, as that it cannot engage thee to serve God so little a time for it? Or have Hell Torments so little Terror in them, that thou canst not resolve to undergo so short a Trouble to avoid them? Or is there any thing in this World, which can make thee neglect a Matter of so great Importance to thee, when thou thinkest how little a while thou canst enjoy it? The Histories of our Country tells us of a *Saxon* Queen in this Land, that by an innocent and happy Piece of Policy, prevailed with her Husband to leave his Debaucheries, and to live Christianly: She did it thus. There was a Day when the King and his Favourites did feast and frolick in an extraordinary Manner; and she, as soon as their Mirth was ended, caused the same Place to be covered with Dung and Filthiness, and to be made

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as loathsome as possible: And when she had done, she desired the King to repair thither, and to look upon the late Scene of their Mirth and Jollity; which the King beholding, and musing in his Mind of the sudden Change, she took the Opportunity to ask him, Where all the Mirth of the past Day was, and what Footsteps did now remain of it? Were not all such things as Wind, and Vanity, which pass away in an Instant, and are not to be recalled? And with these, and the like Speeches, she taught him to despise the World, and to seek after the Kingdom of Heaven. I shall make no other use of the Story, than to beseech thee to reflect upon thy Life past, and to consider what is become of all thy former Pleasures. I know that they are all past and gone, and that the Time is coming, when as much may be said of all thy Worldly Enjoyments; they will be as far from thee, and as useless to thee, as all thy past Pleasures are now: In the Hour of Death, and from that Hour to all Eternity, thou mayst say with them in the Book of *Wisdom*, *What hath Pride profited us? And what good hath Riches with all our Vaunting brought us? All those things are passed away like a Shadow, or like a Post that hasteth by.* And therefore be so wise for thy own Good, as to condemn these worthless fugitive Things, and for the little Remainder of thy Life, to endeavour to make sure of the better, and more abiding Things, which God hath prepared for thee in Heaven. Thou hast sometimes, perhaps, been visited with Sicknes, and hast thought thy self to be upon the Borders of the Grave. Call to mind, I beseech

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beseech thee, what Thoughts did then possess thee: Didst thou not then look upon the World as Vanity? And did not all thy past Follies torment thee with a bitter Remembrance? Did not the few good Things that thou hadst done, please thee better than all the World? And didst thou not heartily repent, that thy whole Life was not employed in such good Ways? Remember, I beseech thee, that it will shortly come to that again; the evil Day is at hand, and thy present Delights will be vanished, and thy worldly Enjoyments be useless and unprofitable; and if thou hast not the Conscience of a good Life to cheer thee, thou wilt be miserable, without Help or Remedy. O prepare, prepare, dear Brother, for that time, by a Holy and Christian Life, and let nothing upon Earth divert or hinder thee. Why should that rob thee of thy greatest Bliss, which will not profit thee in the least when thou hast the greatest Need of it? Why should that make thee miserable for ever, which cannot make thee happy for a little time? Remember thy End, said a Wise Man, and thou shalt never do amiss. He that knows that he stands upon the Brink of Eternity, is a bold Fool if he dares do wickedly. He is mad that will commit a Crime this Day, who knows that before the next he may be bearing the Punishments of it in everlasting Sorrows.

Thus have I laid before thee, dear Brother, some Arguments and Motives to persuade thee to a Holy Life: And so I have brought the First Part of my intended Work to an End. The Things that I have offered to thee, I am sure deserve thy serious Consideration: Let them be
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considered accordingly, and suffer them to have their due Influence upon thee, and I shall give thee no farther Trouble in this Matter. Weigh them well, and according to the Reason thou findest in them, so do ; and I ask no more of thee. Live, as a Man created by God on purpose to know, and love, and serve him here, and to enjoy him for ever hereafter, ought to live. Live, as a Man advanced to the Knowledge and Profession of Christianity, is obliged to live. Live, as a Man that must give an Account hereafter of his whole Life to a just and impartial Judge, is in all reason bound to live. Live, as one that believes that he shall be unspeakably, and eternally miserable, if he lives amiss ; and that he shall be eternally happy, if he lives as he ought. Live, as one that knows that he has but a short Life to live, a Life that is but a Moment in respect of Eternity ; and that (yet) upon this little Moment his Eternal State does depend. In a Word, Live, as a Man dying, hastening to the Grave, and to the Judgment Seat of Christ, and to everlasting Bliss, or Woe, must needs think himself concerned to live. Live thus, dear Brother, and I have my Desire. Only let me beg thy Prayers, that I may live thus likewise, that both of us may be happy for ever. *Amen, Amen.*

The End of the First Part.

GENE.

GENERAL DIRECTIONS

HOW TO LIVE A Holy and Christian LIFE.

PART II.

The Introduction.

I Am now, dear Brother, to give thee some *Directions*, how to live that *Holy* and *Christian Life*, which in the former Part of this Book, I have endeavoured to persuade thee to. It shall be my Care not to trouble thee with many, and less necessary Things; and I beg of thee, that it may be thine, to consider what I say impartially, and to give it the regard which, upon consideration, thou shalt find it to deserve. Now, because I suppose thee to be convinced, That it is necessary thou shouldest live a Holy Life, if thou wouldest be happy eternally: The first Thing I shall advise thee to, is,

CHAP.

C H A P. I.

Sect. 1. *Containing the first Advice, Seriously to resolve upon a Holy Life ; the Necessity of such a Resolution, and the great Virtue and Efficacy of it.*

Sect. 2. *Containing some Directions how to form a lasting Resolution. First, to Resolve soberly and deliberately, not rashly and in haste ; maturely to consider what it is we must Resolve, and carefully to examine all the Advantages and Disadvantages on both Sides. Secondly, to take the Matter into Consideration several distinct Times, before we fix our Resolution. Thirdly, to back this Resolution with a solemn Vow.*

Sect. 3. *A Prosecution of the same Argument, containing some further Directions in making a last Resolution ; as Fourthly, to write down our Resolutions in the Words wherein we make them, and to engage our selves to God in a solemn Bond and Contract. And Fifthly, to make known this Resolution to the World, as often as a fit Occasion offers, which very much tends to the Glory of God, delivers us from many Temptations, and makes us more stedfast to what we Resolve. And Sixthly, to seek out some good Men*
who

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who have taken up the same Resolutions, and to contract an intimate Friendship and Acquaintance with them ; or if we cannot find any such, to endeavour to persuade our old Friends and Companions to enter into such a Religious Friendship.

1. **T**O Resolve upon it. Make an absolute, and peremptory Resolution to live a Holy Life. " I see, it is necessary that I should do " so, (mayst thou say,) I cannot be happy for " ever, if I do not live so ; and therefore I am " resolved, I will live so ; and nothing shall di- " vert or hinder me." Without this peremptory Resolution, thou wilt never be able to do what thou mayst desire : Thou mayst begin well, but wilt fail to persevere to the End. Thou wilt be as the double-minded Man, which St. James speaks of, *Chap. i. v. 8, Unstable in all thy Ways:* One while in the good Way, and another while in the bad, according to the Circumstances of thy Life, and the Sway of thy Inclinations. But with this Resolution begin and prosper. Resolution worketh Wonders every Day in other Matters ; and in this, be confident, it will do much more ; because God will bless it. It hath a mighty Efficacy in it self, and whoever is possessed of it, seldom fails to bring his Designs to pass. It makes a Man intent upon the Thing he would do, inquisitive after the best Means to effect it, watchful and ready to lay hold upon all fitting Opportunities, jealous of the least Impediments and Hindrances, bold and constant in the midst of Difficulties and Dangers, and so excludes that Forgetfulness and
D Inadvertency,

Inadvertency, that Negligence and Sloth, that Rashness and Levity, that Doubtfulness and Faint-heartedness, which overthrows the good Purposes of many, and frustrates their best Designs. But how much greater, will the Efficacy of it be, thinkest thou, when it is backed with the Almighty Grace of God, which in this Matter will be ever assisting to it? The Truth is, thy Work is half done when thou art fully Resolved; and if thy Resolution fail not, I dare promise thee as good Success as thy Heart can wish. But then Care must be taken that thy Resolution continue firm, and strong; and that it may do so, thou must observe the following Directions.

§ 2. Thou must make it Soberly and Deliberately, not Rashly and in Haste. Thou must Consider what thou art about to Resolve upon, what Difficulties and Discouragements thou art like to meet with, and what Dangers and Inconveniences may attend thee in it. And when thou hast done this, thou must consult thy own Reason and Understanding, upon these and the like Questions: 'Is it reasonable that I should undertake, and resolve upon such a Business as this is? Is it possible for me to effect it? Can I march through all the Difficulties, and overcome all the Temptations which may or can befall me in it? Is the Design honourable, and worthy of a Man? And can I hope for a sufficient Recompence for all the Troubles it will put me to?' And for the avoiding of all Error and Mistake, it will not be amiss for thee, to put down in Writing (if thou canst) all that thou art to consider upon, as also thy Judgment and Determination upon every Particular. However, fail not to get as clear and distinct

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an Apprehension of every thing as possibly thou canst, and let nothing pass thee without due Consideration. Run through all the Parts and Duties of a Holy Life in thy Thoughts, and tell thy Heart, ' This I must do ; this I must fly from ; ' this I must suffer ; Almighty God requires it, and ' I cannot hope to be excused in any thing. Tell ' me, O my Heart, (mayst thou say) wilt thou be ' content I shall do it, or not ? Wilt thou not ' prove false to me, if I do Resolve it ? These ' Things I must attend to, not for a few Days on- ' ly, or at some certain Times and Seasons, but con- ' stantly and perpetually, throughout the whole ' course of my Life : It must be my Business to o- ' bey and please God in all my Ways, and all my ' worldly Affairs and fleshly Pleasures must give ' Place to it. Tell me, O my Heart, how dost ' thou approve of this ? Have I thy free Consent ' to undertake it ? And wilt thou be content that ' I now begin it ? ' And then suppose within thy self the greatest Temptations that can befall thee, to discourage and draw thee aside ; suppose that thy Mother who bare thee in her Womb, and nourished thee with her Breasts, and loves thee as her Life, should come with weeping Eyes to thee, and with the most melting Expressions that Love and Sorrow could put into her Mouth, should intreat thee to do some wicked Act, or to forbear the doing of thy Duty in any Matter : And suppose the Wife of thy Bosom, who is as thy very Soul, should join with her in the same Desire, and tell thee, as *Dalilah* did *Sampson*, *Judg. 16. v. 15. How canst thou say I love thee, when thy Heart is not with me ?* And, it may be, thy dearest Friends and Familiars may be importunate

with thee also for the same Thing; and then say unto thy self, ' Shall I be able to withstand all these Temptations, to resist the Importunities of a kind and tender Mother, to turn my Back upon the Wife of my Bosom, and to disoblige all my Friends, rather than sin against God, and wound my own Conscience?' And further, represent unto thy self the worst Things that can befall a Man in this World, as likely to befall thy self for thy Conscience towards God: Suppose thou must lose all thou hast in the World, yea, and thy very Life, if thou wilt not sin against him; suppose thou must suffer the sharpest Reproaches and the most cruel Death that ever was invented, if thou wilt be faithful to him, and do thy Duty: And then charge thy Heart to tell thee, whether it will not sink at such a Tryal, and basely betray thee to Sin and Shame. ' These are hard Things indeed, (mayst thou say) the bare Thoughts of them are dreadful; and how much more will the Things themselves be, when thou comest to try them. But what good Thing was ever obtained without some Difficulty? And what wise Man was ever discouraged with Difficulties, that was sure of a Recompence far exceeding the worst of Troubles he could possibly undergo? Is it not reasonable that I should do and suffer any thing that my God shall impose upon me? Should not that Life and Being, which he hath given me, be altogether at his Service? May not my dear and loving Saviour justly expect as much from me, since he hath purchased me with his most precious Blood? Did not he undergo much more for my Sake, than he requires me to do for his? And may not that Joy
' which

‘ which encouraged him, be a just Encouragement
‘ for me? Will not Heaven make Amends for
‘ all, and justifie my Choice and Resolution to
‘ all the World? What if I am weak and frail?
‘ What if there be many subtle Enemies to this my
‘ Undertaking? Is not he that is with me, greater
‘ than all that are against me? Cannot the Spirit
‘ of my God make my Weakness strong; and
‘ cause me to triumph over all my Adversaries?
‘ Has not he done as much for Millions of such
‘ Weaklings as I am? Have not old Men, not-
‘ withstanding the Infirmities of Age; and young
‘ Men, notwithstanding the Strength of their
‘ Lusts; and Women, notwithstanding the Frailty
‘ of their Sex, taken up the very same Resolution,
‘ and in spite of all the Powers of Darkness,
‘ and their accursed Instruments, made it good to
‘ the last Minute of their Lives? I know, I know,
‘ my God and Saviour will not fail me in so good
‘ an Undertaking, and he will make my Weak-
‘ ness to redound to the Glory of his Grace; and
‘ therefore I may, I must, I will, I do resolve
‘ upon a Holy Life.’ Thus, I do advise thee,
to Consider Things before thou dost Resolve, that
thy Resolution may be the Work of thy whole
Soul, that thy Understanding may fully approve
of it under the most disadvantageous Circum-
stances, and thy Will entirely embrace it, and
that nothing may befall thee in thy After-life that
may stagger thee as not foreseen, or cause thee
to question the Wisdom of thy Undertaking.
And this Advice (thou must know) is not the
meer Issue of my own Brain, but the Counsel
of our great and good Master in two plain Para-
bles; Luke 14. v. 28, 29, &c. “ *Which of you,*

*" (says he) intending to build a Tower, sitteth
" not down first, and counteth the Cost, whether
" he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply
" after he hath laid the Foundation, and is
" not able to finish it, all that behold it begin
" to mock him, saying, this Man began to build,
" and was not able to finish it. Or what King,
" going to make War against another King, sitteth
" not down first, and considereth whether
" he be able with ten Thousand to meet him
" that cometh against him with twenty Thousand,
" or else while the other is yet a great
" Way off, he sendeth an Embassy, and desireth
" Conditions of Peace."* Which Parables do plainly tell us, That no wise Man will begin to build, but upon Fore-sight that he shall be able to finish: That no wise King will begin a War, without first considering his Ability to go through with it. Nor can he be thought wise, that will take upon him to be a Disciple of Christ, and to follow him in a Holy Life, before he hath well considered what he undertakes, and what Trouble and Danger it may cost him to do so; the Fruits of such rash and unadvised Undertakings can ordinarily be no other than Shame and Sorrow. If Religion be once thoroughly wrought into the Heart (which will not be done in an Hour or two, and can be done by no better Way than by frequent Meditations) it will in all probability keep Possession of it for ever: And if a Man be once Resolved upon the Practice of Piety and Virtue, from a full Conviction of the Goodness and Reasonableness of it, he will hardly be turned aside from it, by any Temptation; whereas, if it be admitted into the Borders or the skirts of the Soul only,

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possess the Fancy or Imagination, and by the Help of it alone does warm the Affections, it will in a little Time be cast off, and all the good Purposes, which it may for the Present produce, will, upon the least Alteration of Circumstances, be forgotten, or laid aside.

§ 2. And therefore in the second Place, I shall commend to thee, that thou do not fully determine, and fix thy Resolution upon once Considering, or Deliberating, (how seriously soever thou hast done it) but that thou take the Matter twice or thrice into Consideration, after some little Intermissions: For so thou wilt discern, whether thy Resolution be the Effect of thy Judgment, and thy entire Choice; or of a good Temper of Body, apt to receive Religious Impressions; and a kindly Heat, kindled by the Working of thy Imagination. If it be the good Temper, and warm Imagination that disposes thee to it, thou wilt be of another Mind after thou hast slept, or been dealing in other Matters: But if it proceed from the better Principle but now mentioned, what thou approvest of this Day, thou wilt approve of to Morrow, and for ever; and the more thou Considerest Things, the better thou wilt like of thy intended Resolution, and the more ready thou wilt be, fully and finally to fix it. What thou hast Considered one Day then in order to a Resolution, my Counsel is, That thou take a Review of it the next Day: Consider afresh what thou art to do, Consider the Pleasures which thou must forsake, and the Difficulties thou must undergo; and if, after all, thou findest thy self sincerely bent to serve the Lord in a Holy and Christian Life; and no Objection offers it self,

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which thou perceivest thy Heart to stumble at, then fix thy Resolution, resolve fully, peremptorily and irrevocably. And that it may have all the Strength, which we can possibly add to it, let me advise thee further,

§ 3. To back it with a Vow, with a solemn Protestation to Almighty God, to keep it firm and stedfast to the End of thy Life: For as long as any Sense of God remains upon thy Soul, thou wilt dread the Not-doing of that, which by a solemn Promise to God thou hast bound thy self to do; it being in the Opinion of all Mankind a most abominable Thing, to falsify our Vows and Oaths to God, and deserving the severest Vengeance that can fall upon the Heads of wicked Men.

§ 4. And further, when thou hast done this, it will not be amiss to write down thy Resolution and Protestation, in the very Words thou hast made it; adding likewise the Year, and Month, and Day, wherein thou didst thus engage thy self; and to keep it by thee, as a Thing of great Concernment to thee; and once a Month at least to look seriously upon it, saying to thy Heart, ‘ See, O my Heart, what
‘ thou hast done, observe the Bond which thou
‘ hast laid upon thy self; it is thy own Act
‘ and Deed, there is no disowning it, or ex-
‘ cepting against it: As sure as I now see it
‘ with my Eyes, it is recorded before God in
‘ Heaven, and it shall one Day be brought forth
‘ against me to my everlasting Condemnation, if
‘ I do not discharge and satisfy it: Go on, O
‘ my Heart, go on, as thou hast begun, to keep
‘ thy Resolution firm, and to pay thy Vows unto
‘ the

‘ the most High : And be confident that the
‘ Lord will prosper thy good Desires, and En-
‘ deavours, and reward thee according to his
‘ gracious Covenant and Promise, with everlast-
‘ ing Glory and Felicity.’

§ 5. All this being done, I think thou mayst
do well to make known thy Resolution to the
World, as often as fitting Occasions may be
offered thee, that is, as often as God may re-
ceive Honour by it, or thy self be secured from
Temptation or Sin. Such Occasions, in this Age,
thou wilt frequently meet with ; sometimes thou
wilt fall into the Company of Evil Men, that
dishonour the Holy Religion which they profess,
by their wicked and ungodly Lives ; and they
will not spare to Reproach thee for not running-
with them into the same Excesses and Debau-
cheries : Then thou mayst do well to tell them,
‘ That thou art fully resolved against such Practices,
‘ and that thou didst long since take upon thee
‘ a Profession which allows them not, as they
‘ have also done ; a Profession of Obedience to
‘ the Doctrine, and of Conformity to the Ex-
‘ ample of the Pure and Holy Jesus ; and that
‘ thou canst not without gross Hypocrisy and in-
‘ excusable Folly act so contrary to it as they
‘ do.’ Such a Declaration as this, will Honour
thy Lord and Master, and shame evil Doers ;
if they be not past all Shame, and all Hope of
Amendment. Sometimes again, thou wilt meet
with Men that will play the Devil’s Part, and use
all their Cunning to persuade thee to some sin-
full Act : Such Men thou must let know with-
out Delay, ‘ That thou art in the full Purpose of
‘ thy Heart, as well as in outward Profession,

‘ a Christian ; and that thou art resolved to serve
‘ thy Lord and Master to thy Death, and never
‘ to do the Thing which thou shalt know will
‘ in the least Displease him : That, how light a
‘ Matter soever others may make it, to disown
‘ him by their Works, whom with their Mouths
‘ they own and flatter ; yet thou esteamest it so
‘ base and shameful a thing, that by the help
‘ of God’s Grace, thou hast determined never to
‘ be guilty of it ; and that thou canst not but
‘ believe it to be as bad, nay much worse, to
‘ be false to God, than to be false to Men ; and
‘ that they who do not think so, do most un-
‘ worthily prefer vile Dust and Ashes, before
‘ the High and Holy God of Heaven and Earth.’
This must needs stop the Mouths of the most
impudent Tempers ; and when thou art known
to the World, to be thus well resolved, thou
wilt find a happy Freedom from Temptations
by it. Thy old Companions in Sin (if thou hast
had any) will cease to importune thee, and
although the Devil will never cease to trouble
thee, thou wilt disarm him of one of the most
dangerous Weapons, by which he destroys the
Souls of Men ; nay, thou wilt turn it against
himself, and make that to be the Instrument
of thy Safety, which might have been the Instru-
ment of thy Ruin : I mean, the Fear of Reproach
from wicked Men (which keeps Thousands in
Bondage to Sin all their Days, going on in their
wonted Courses, not because they approve, or
are truly pleas’d with them, but because they
are ashamed to amend them) which Reproach,
when thou hast once courageously contemned by
publickly Owning thy Resolution, thou wilt make
but

but little Account of it afterwards: For, as a resolute Soldier, that has passed through the hardest Service against the Enemy, without Wound or Scar, feels no Fear within himself of that which remains; so it will be with thee; having born the first Reproaches of an ungodly World, which are ever the most bitter, thou wilt readily contemn and set at nought the rest. The only Fear of Reproach, which will then remain in thee, will be, but that which is just and good, *viz.* the Fear of deserved Reproach, for not making good that Resolution which thou hast declared to the World; and the greater thy Fear of this is, the safer and the happier thou wilt be.

Object. Against this Part of my Advice, I know but one Thing that can be objected, *viz.* That in case thou shouldest fail to make good thy Resolution after this, returning to thy former Wickedness or Carelessness, as many perhaps have done after they have purposed well, thou shalt bring Shame upon thy self, and Dishonour to thy Holy Religion.

Ans. And true it is (my Brother) that these will be the Effects of thy Failing; and it is as true, that great Care ought to be taken, that nothing be done which will produce so great an Evil as either of those. But it is not necessary, that thou shouldest fail thus; nay it is not probable, if thou usest that Sincerity, Consideration, Caution, and Circumspection which I have commended to thee, because of the sufficient Grace of God, which will never fail thee: So that the Force of the Objection lies not against all Resolving or owning thy Resolution, but against doing

doing it Rashly, and Unadvisedly, Proudly and Vain-gloriously : And it only admonisheth us to proceed with great Deliberation and Prudence, and to forbear the publick Owning of it, 'till we have had some Proof of our Sincerity towards God, by the Discharge of our several Duties, and the Resistance of some of the more Dangerous Temptations ; especially if we know our selves to be of a hasty Temper, and not very constant in other Things. But this being secured, I doubt not but that thou wilt find my Advice good ; and I did the rather propose it to thee, because of the abounding Wickedness of the Age ; for though almost every Man calls himself a Christian, and thinks himself affronted if he be not so esteemed ; yet true Christian Piety is owned by very few, and it is become as disgraceful, truly to praise it, or to plead for it, (more is our Misery !) as it is to disown that good Name, which should never be without it ; and therefore we take it to be as much our Duty now, thus to own the Cause of it against the vile Practices of those, who sottishly Reproach and Persecute it, even whilst they call themselves Christians ; as it was of Old, the Duty of Christians to own the Name and Profession, against the Persecutions of the Heathenish and Unbelieving World. Certain it is, That Christ is as well confessed, by maintaining and defending that real Holiness, which he came to implant in the Hearts and Lives of Men, as he is by the Belief and Acknowledgment of those Things, which he was pleased to do and suffer in order to it ; and therefore on the other Hand, the denying, the dissembling, or not
owning

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owning our Obligation to this Holiness, or our Resolution to imbrace and live in it, when ever we have a just Cause to own it, is as truly Denying of Christ, as our Protesting in case of Danger, that we know him not, or belong not to him, can be thought to be. Be not afraid nor ashamed, then, to make thy self known to the World to be in the Resolution of thy Heart a true Christian, that Christ may not be ashamed of thee before the Angels of God, in that Day when all the Secrets of Mens Hearts shall be made manifest.

Those vile Wretches that Live to the Dishonour of him whose Name they are called by, and to the Reproach of human Nature, blush not (as thou mayst observe) to make known the Baseness of their Designs, and the Lewdness of their Actions; they commit their Wickedness in the Sight of the Sun, and are not ashamed to boast of it when they have done; and shouldst thou be ashamed to Live worthy of Christ, to be truly a Son of God, and to have a Design upon Glory and Immortality? No, let them be ashamed that do shameful Things; but for thee, thy Design is Honourable and worthy of a Man, and thy Resolution is becoming a Christian, and it is necessary to thee, being one. There is a Shame, we are told, that ends in Death; and surely this is that, when Men are ashamed of that which is truly their Glory, and dare not be what they know they ought to be, because they may be reproached when they are known to be so.

§ 6. There is but one thing more to be added in this matter, *viz.* That thou wilt do well to seek out some good Men that have taken up the same

same Resolution, and to acquaint thy self with them, and if possibly thou canst, to make them thy familiar and Bosom-Friends. Let them know thy Design, and Purpose of living Holily, and Christianly. Tell them what an Esteem thou hast for them, because thou perceivest that they Design to do no less: Beg their good Opinion, and their Love, according as they shall behold thy Sincerity and Reality in the Profession thou dost make: Desire their Prayers, their Instructions, their Reproofs, their Encouragements, according as they shall see thee stand in need of them; and that they will look upon thee as a poor and unworthy Member of that Holy Body, to which they do belong, and of which Christ is the Head; and that hopes by the Mercy of God to be glorified with Christ one Day, together with them; and that they will therefore have that Regard and Tenderness for thee, which the Members of the same Body have for one another; and desire them to accept of the like Regard and Love from thee, and of all the good Offices that true Christian Charity can enable thee to do for them. I confess it will be no easy Matter for thee to find such Persons; the Number of them is but small, and they are generally no great Pretenders, but modest and reserved, and perhaps more reserved, all things considered, than they ought to be: For, though the vile Hypocrisy of Pretenders to Holiness in this last Age, and the Daily Abuse of its good Name by Men that seek themselves in the Ruin of the Church, may seem to commend their Closeness, and Desire of being unknown; yet the growth of Atheism and Prophaneness, which those false Pretences

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have occasioned, and the Danger we are fallen into of losing those great Advantages for the Practice of Piety, which our Church affords us, does more strongly require them to lay open that Piety which they Practise in secret, and to let the World know, by Actions suitable to a good Profession, That there are some, that own the Cause of real Holiness, without Hypocrisy and Guile. And let me tell thee by the way, that if these good Men of this Church, will thus shew themselves, and unite together in the several Parts of the Kingdom, disposing themselves into Fraternities, or friendly Societies, and engaging each other in their several and respective Combinations, to be helpful and serviceable to one another in all good Christian Ways, it would be the most effectual Means for restoring our decaying Christianity to its Primitive Life and Vigour, and the supporting of our tottering and sinking Church. But, not to lead thee too far from the Matter I was about; If thou canst find any of these good People, I have spoken of; I charge thee let thy Heart cleave unto them, and let there not be the least Strangeness, so far as lies in thee, between you. Be all as one Man (thus it was with the Primitive Christians, *Acts 2.*) and so march forward in the good Ways of God against all Opposition, observing and *considering one another, to provoke unto Love and to good Works, as the Apostle's Expressions are, Heb. 10. v. 24.* having an Eye continually to the Captain of our Salvation, who is entered into Heaven, in despite of all the Powers of Darkness; and is there preparing a Place for us. Thou wilt be no sooner engaged
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with these good Men in Love and Friendship, but thou wilt begin to feel the Advantages of it. Thou wilt be afraid of no Discouragements, when thou hast gotten the Assistance of so many true Friends; and thou wilt never fall back from that Resolution, which hath been the Occasion of engaging thee in such good Company. If thou forgettest thy self at any Time, thou wilt not be without a Remembrancer, and whenever thou failest, thou wilt find a Restorer: And when thou art seized with any Coldness or Dulness, they will be ready to warm and quicken thee. These are Advantages so considerable, that thou canst not prudently stick at any Pains it may cost thee to procure them: And therefore let me tell thee for a Conclusion of this particular, That if thou canst not be so happy as to be acquainted with any of these good Men, thou must do as much as lies in thee, to make some of thy old Acquaintance good, by engaging them in the same Resolution which thou hast taken up thy self. To which purpose, thou must make Use of all the Knowledge thou hast of them, and the Interest thou hast in them: Tell them what thou art resolved upon, with the Grounds and Reasons of thy Resolution; urge them to consider and weigh them seriously and impartially: If they approve of what thou hast done, press them to do the same; if they have ought to object against it, Answer their Objections, and remove their Prejudices: If thou canst not Work upon them at one Time, try what thou canst do at another, and watch for the fittest Seasons for thy Purpose: If one Way of Discouraging will not take Effect, try what another Way

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Way will do, and remember to fit thy self to their Tempers, and Dispositions, so far as innocently thou mayst: If Reason will not prevail, try whether Importunity may not, and to all Endeavours with them fail not to add Prayers to God for them: In a Word, press them with Arguments and Love, and press Almighty God with Prayers in their behalf, and be confident, that sooner or later thou shalt speed according to thy Hearts desire. One Person thus gained will make thee amends for all thy Pains; for besides that, he may prove in a short Time as serviceable a Friend to thee, as those that entered upon a Holy Life before thee; he will be a far greater Comfort to thee than any of them: Because in all the good he does, thou wilt have some kind of Share, and every Step he takes in those good Ways thou hast brought him to, will be as a new Pledge to assure thee of thy future Glory; there being no greater Promises made to any, than to those *who turn many to Righteousness, from the Error of their Ways*; See *Dan. 12. v. 3.* and *James 5. v. 20.* But enough hath been said of Framing and Fixing thy Resolution, and the Things which I can conceive to be requisite for the making it firm and effectual. It is now Time that I direct thee how to put it in Practice and therefore,

C H A P.

C H A P II.

Sect. 1. *Containing the second Advice, To take up our Cross and forsake all to follow Christ; wherein is explained the Nature of this Duty, and the Necessity of it.*

Sect. 2. *Containing several Arguments to reconcile us to this Duty of Self-denial, from the Necessity of it, in order to our spiritual Life and Health; from the Example of our Saviour, who was a great Pattern of Self-denial; from the Reasonableness of this Duty considered in it self, and the great Advantages of it.*

Sect. 3. *Containing some Directions how to put this Duty of Self-denial in Practice.*

§ 1. **T**HOU must deny thy self, take up thy Cross and forsake all. This is the first Thing that is to be done by those that are resolved upon a Holy and Christian Life; and it is so Necessary to be done in the first Place, that if thou failest in it, it will be a vain Thing for me to offer thee any further Direction. Now it so much concerns thee to be fully persuaded of this Truth, that thou must give me Leave to shew thee, that I tell thee no more in this Case, and give no other Advice, than what our blessed Lord and Master hath done: See *Luke 9. v. 23, 24.* He said to them all, if any Man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his Cross daily, and follow me; for whosoever will save his

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his Life shall lose it, but whosoever will lose it for my Sake, the same shall save it. The Meaning of which Words, is plainly this, All that will be Christians indeed, must deny themselves, take up their Cross, and follow Christ; and not reserve so much as their very Lives, but be willing and ready to resign up all for him. But lest we should imagine this to concern some choice Persons only, whom he designed to bring to greater Perfection than others are obliged to aim at, such as his Apostles may be thought to be, he was pleased to speak as much, at another Time, to the Multitudes that followed him, *Luke 14. v. 25, 26, 27. There were great Multitudes with him, and he turned and said unto them, if any Man come to me, and hate not his Father and Mother, and Wife and Children, and Brethren and Sisters, yea, and his own Life also, he cannot be my Disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his Cross and come after me, cannot be my Disciple;* that is, he that will not deny, and forsake (as we are wont to do those Things we hate) whatsoever is dear to him in the World, be it Father and Mother, or Wife and Children, or Brethren and Sisters, preferring Christ before them all, and is not fully resolved and prepared to suffer any thing, how hard soever, for Christ's Sake, cannot be a Disciple of Christ, or a true Christian. The Word [*Cannot*] signifies such an Impossibility, as implies a Contradiction. To deny our selves, and all our dearest Interests in this World, is essential to the sincere Profession of Christianity, and therefore he, who will not do this cannot be a Christian. Those dear Things which he cannot renounce, will not suffer him to
take

take this Profession upon him, or if he do take it upon him, they will in time cause him to repent his Undertaking, and to fall away with Shame from it. And then in the Words following, he advises them to consider seriously what they are about to do, before they took upon them to be his Disciples; and that his Advice might sink more deeply into their Minds, he expresses himself in two Parables (which I have before mentioned) *viz. Of a Man intending to build a Tower, and sitting down first to consider the Cost; and of a King going to make War against another King, and considering first his Abilities to go through with it:* And then he concludes *v. 33. So likewise, whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my Disciple.* Which Conclusion makes it a plain Case, That we cannot wisely nor safely engage our selves to Christ, or list our selves as Soldiers under his Banner, 'till we have denied, renounced, given up all Interest in our selves, and whatsoever is dear unto us. Not thus prepared, we do but exasperate and provoke an Enemy, our old Enemy the Devil, whose Forces we shall not be able to withstand; and so lay a Foundation for our future Shame and Ruin. And though at first reading, we may think those Comparisons but ill applied, for what Agreement is there between having Riches and Armies, and forsaking all that we have? Yet upon second Thoughts, we may perceive a very wise Design in it. For Christianity is a spiritual Warfare, and some of the most Powerful Enemies we are to encounter, are the Riches and Pleasures and Honours of this World; and therefore the Strength and Courage

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rage of a Christian Soldier, whereby he will obtain a glorious Victory, consists in Self-denial, and a Contempt of this World. And a Christian is God's Building, or spiritual House, the Temple of God; and the very Foundation of this Building is laid in Humility and Self-denial; from whence proceed all those Divine Graces and Virtues, which both perfect and adorn the Building. Which makes Humility, and Poverty of Spirit, renouncing the Love of this World and the very Possession of it too, in some Cases, as necessary to our becoming Christians, as a great deal of Money is to erect and perfect a stately and magnificent Building. This appears to be a great Truth, and no groundless Fancy, by the Parable of the Wedding-Supper in the former Part of the Chapter, which thou mayst do well to reflect upon. The Master sent his Servants to call them that were bidden, when his Supper was ready; but they all refused, and desired to be excused: One had bought a Piece of Ground, and he must go and see it; another had bought five Yoke of Oxen, and he must go and prove them; and another had married a Wife, and he could not come: But when he sent his Servants to call the Poor, the Blind and the Lame, they came in immediately. So that the poor and miserable People of the World, that have no worldly Thing to trust to, or those who have these Things, but have conquered the Love of them, are better disposed to receive the Gospel, and to become Christians, than the Rich and the Great that have the World at Will, as we say, and wallow in the Pleasures thereof. We have a very remarkable Instance of the Mischief that worldly Riches do

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to those that both have and love them, *Mark 10. v. 17, 18, &c.* and there are several Things in the Chapter, relating to it, that deserve our Regard. In the Verses before, we find our Blessed Saviour displeased with his Disciples for forbidding little Children to be brought unto him, and saying to them, *Suffer little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God*; that is, their Innocency and Simplicity, their Willingness to be guided and sustained by others, makes them the fittest Emblems of those that do truly belong to my Church and Kingdom. And then he adds, *Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little Child, he shall not enter therein*; that is, he that takes not the Christian Profession upon him as a little Child, that is, with that very Humility, Disinterestedness Self-denial and Resignation, as is remarkable in little Children, will never submit to those Laws which I give to the World, and shall never be received by me as a Christian. Now immediately upon this, as if Divine Providence had designed it for a Confirmation of this Truth, there came a young Man to Christ, upon a very weighty and important Business: This young Man's Heart was in a good Measure set upon Eternal Life; and he had entertained a great Opinion of Christ, as appeared by the Haste he made, by the Humility of his Carriage, and the Words he used to him. *He came running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit Eternal Life?* He had done much in order to it before, *he had kept the Commandments from his Youth up.* So he professed

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fessed, and there is no Doubt but he spake what he thought, and what he had done in a good Measure; for it is said v. 21. *That Jesus loved him*, that is, he approved of his good Beginnings, and desired that they might be perfected: But when he told him, that there was one Thing still wanting, viz. *That he must go and sell all, and give to the Poor, and take up his Cross and follow him*; the forward young Man disliked his Counsel, *became sad, and went away* grieved. And why? *Because he had great Possessions*. He had them and he loved them likewise; and who can blame him for being sad, when he was told, That either he must lose Eternal Life, or part with them? He had not got his Riches by Fraud and Deceit, by Violence and Oppression, as Many among us have done, and resolve to keep them, and yet hope for Everlasting Life, (for so he had not kept the Commandments, which Christ spake to him of) his Love to the World had not prevailed so far upon him, as to draw him to such Wickedness: But his Fault was, that he had so great a Love to his Riches, that he could not find in his Heart to part with them, no not for the obtaining of Everlasting Life. Had he been as a little Child, and had valued them no more than a Child would have done; he had obtained his Desire, and had entered into the Kingdom of God: But, because it was not thus with him, his good Meanings miscarried, and he fell short of that Happiness which he sought after. Thus was this unhappy Man a sad Instance of the Truth of our Blessed Saviour's Words; and so the Disciples looked upon him, being astonished

milhed at the bewitching Power of worldly Possessions; (for it is not improbable, that this might be one cause of their Wonder, as well as the Words of their Master upon this Accident. For though his first Words, *How hardly shall those that have Riches, enter into the Kingdom of God?* Might have astonished them another Time; yet his second Words, *How hard is it for them that trust in Riches, to enter into the Kingdom of God?* Would have removed their Astonishment; it being easy for them to apprehend, that those that trust in Riches will not trust in God, and therefore shall not be saved by him. But they were astonished to see a Man that meant so well, and was come so near to the Kingdom of God, overthrown by his great Possessions: And since Riches had so great a Power over him, and could turn him back from the Kingdom of God, they believed they would turn all the Rich Men in the World from it. If he, after having kept the Commandments from his Youth up, did trust in his Riches; no Rich Man could be found, they thought, that did not trust in them; and therefore said among themselves, *v. 16. Who can then be saved?* And though *Peter* immediately expressed some Hope of his Salvation, and the Salvation of his Fellow-Disciples, because they had left all, and followed him; yet it appears from what follows in the *Chapter* from *v. 35.* that he was deceived in his Opinion of what they had done; for, though they had left their Possessions to follow him, yet there was something of a Selfishness still remaining in them, and to be renounced by them: They had too great an Opinion of the

the World's Grandeur; and they aimed at it more than they were allow'd to do: And this their Master was very well aware of, and therefore he tells them in another Place, *Mat. 18. v. 23.* (when they had propos'd a Question to him which discover'd the Inclinations of their Hearts, asking him, *Who was the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?*) That except they were converted and became as little Children, that is, as unconcerned for that Greatness which they thought of, as little Children are, *They should not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* They were converted in a good Measure then, and had given a good Evidence of it, by quitting their Possessions for their Master's Sake: But it seems there was still something to be done: They were not so estranged from the World, nor so resigned as to all fleshly Interest, but they needed to be put in mind, that they must deny themselves more intirely, *and become as little Children.* Then would they be fit for that Service he designed to put them upon, and not 'till then. And thus indeed it was with them: For, whilst their Heads were possess'd with a Fancy, that their Master was to be a mighty Temporal Prince, and their Souls were hankering after the Glories which they imagined they should partake of with him, they were often offended with his Discourse; and when they saw him in the Hands of his Enemies, and began to suspect the Ruin of their Hopes and Expectations, they shamefully deserted him. Thus *Mark 8.* when he began to tell them, *That he must suffer many Things, and be rejected of the chief Priests and Elders and Scribes, and*
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he put to Death, Peter took him and rebuked him, v. 32. And when those Things were coming upon him, which he spake of, *They all forsook him and fled*, as we read *Mark 14. v. 50.* But then afterwards, when their Mistakes were rectified, and their Souls more perfectly purged from the Love of Earthly Things, by the Descent of the Holy Spirit upon them, every Word that their Master had spoken to them, and which the Spirit brought to their Remembrance, was dear unto them, and they were not afraid nor ashamed to confess him before their greatest Enemies. Then the Cross of Christ was their greatest Glory; and to be made like to Him in Suffering, and Patience, and Resignation to God, was the great Desire and Joy of their Hearts. Then they could call upon Men to deny themselves, and forsake all, as earnestly, as their Master had done before them; for what else do those repeated Exhortations signify, of *not living to our selves; of Dying to our Sins; of being Crucified to the World; of being Crucified, Dead and Buried with Christ; of offering our selves Sacrifices to God*, and many more the like, which we read in their Epistles? And indeed they did it very effectually, whilst their Doctrine and Practice went Hand in Hand together; for in spite of the Wickedness of the World, and the subtle Malice of the Devil, they prevailed in all Places, and filled every Corner of the World with Wonders of Self-denial, and Patience, and Contempt of the World; with Men that could take *joyfully the Spoiling of their Goods*, as we read *Heb. 10. v. 34.* And that counted not their Lives dear

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for Christ's Sake, and the Gospel's. And such Self-denying Men were Christians generally in the first Ages of Christianity: Witness *Athenagoras*, who speaking of those of his Time, tells us, 'We are not moved with the Loss of our Estates, which our Enemies wrest from us; nor with the Violence that is offered to our Credit and Reputation, or if there be any Thing of greater Concernment than these; for although these Things are mightily prized and valued amongst Men, yet can we despise and slight them: Nay, we cannot only when beaten refrain from striking again, and make no Resistance against those that invade and spoil us; but to those that smite one Cheek, we can turn the other; and to them that take away the Coat, we can let go the Cloak also.' Thus did the Apostles and first Christians deny themselves, and forsake all; and are not we bound to do so likewise, thinkest thou? May we be his Disciples upon easier Terms than they were? Has he made the Way to Heaven broader than it was, and given us Allowances which he vouchsafed not to them of former Ages? No certainly. It is true, we are not altogether in the same Circumstances as they were in; for the Christian Profession (though now honourable among us) was then so vile a Thing in the Eyes of the World, and so extremely hated, that none could take it up, and own it publickly, without Hazarding the Loss of all they had: And therefore, if any were so rash as to take it up before they had denied themselves, they quickly discovered their Rashness and Want of Self-denial, by falling away

rom it : And therefore it must be granted, that Self-denial is not now so necessary, as to the taking up and retaining the bare Profession of Christianity as it was of Old : But then, as to the Practice of it, it is certainly as necessary as ever it was ; and though the Profession be honoured at present, yet the Practice is as much despised ; and the making good of what we do profess in a Pure and Holy Life, will as certainly expose a Man to many Evils (God be thanked, that I cannot say to Death) as the Profession of old was wont to do : And therefore, he that will satisfy that Name which he hath taken upon him, and observe the Profession which he hath made in Baptism, must be brought to that Frame and Temper of Mind, which those good Men in the Beginning of Christianity were brought to, that is, he must be taken off from Himself, from all Self-interests, and Self-satisfactions : He must Renounce all Propriety in Himself and every Thing else ; be dead to the World ; have no more Affection to Worldly Things, than the dead have ; that so nothing may hinder him from living unto God. There are but few indeed that seriously consider this, and therefore we see, that Men generally account themselves Christians from their Baptism ; and as long as they do not renounce their Baptism, they are confident that they are so : But he that hath told us, *That many are called*, that is, to be Christians ; but *few are chosen*, that is, will approve themselves to be so, makes another Judgment of them ; and they will know it one Day to their Shame and Sorrow. They have fallen by God's good Providence,

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vidence, upon that which is in Fashion among us; and they see at present no Reason why they should cast it off, I mean, the outward Profession of Christianity: But as for that which is not Fashionable and in Credit, that is, the Denying of our Selves, and Dying to the World, they never understood it; and because they do not deny themselves, and dye to the World, cannot live to God.

This might suffice, my Brother, to convince thee, that thou must deny thy Self, and forsake all, if thou desirest to live a Holy and Christian Life. But because I know Mens Backwardness to entertain this hard Saying, as they are apt to term it; and because I know that it is so absolutely necessary, that those who will live a Christian Life, do both believe, and practise it; I shall shew thee yet further, that the not considering, or the not practising this Self-denial, hath been the main Cause, why so many have rejected the Gospel in all Ages; and why so many of these that have seemed to receive it, have yielded so lame and so imperfect an Obedience to it. Didst thou never read in thy Bible, how few of those that heard Christ preach whilst he was upon the Earth, and saw the Miracles that he wrought, especially of the greater sort, did truly believe in him? *Have any of the Rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him*; was a choaking Question to any that would dare to speak for him, *John 7. v. 48.* Those few Disciples that he had, were of the poorer Sort of People, that had not much to trust to, or much to lose for his Sake. If any of the richer or greater Sort were convinced, that he was the

Christ, yet they did not dare to own it; they would go by Night, and in secret, to tell him of their Faith; but publickly and openly they professed it not: And what might be the Reason of this, dost thou think? Had not these great Men those natural Powers of judging, of assenting and consenting to the Truth, which the others had? Was not their natural Courage as great, and would they not have shewed it as much in other Cases, as these poor People could have done? Yes undoubtedly. In all other matters They were the wise, Those the ignorant; They the bold and the hardy, Those the poor-spirited and cowardly: But in this Case the Wise were Fools, and the Courageous meer Dastards. And how was this? Those great, those rich and proud Men could not, or would not learn this one Lesson; which would have open'd their blind Eyes, and have raised their poor Spirits, to that degree of Boldness, which they beheld in the Disciples of Christ, and wondered at: *How can ye believe* (said Christ himself to them) *as long as ye receive Honour from one another, and seek not the Honour that cometh from God only?* John 5. v. 44. They loved themselves, and the Praise of Men too well, to approve of any Thing that would lessen their Reputation in the least, or bring them one Step lower in the Esteem of the World: And they were too covetous, as appears from other Places of Scripture, to leave all, to follow one that had not a House to put his Head in. Didst thou never observe the monstrous Unbelief of many among us, and the gross Hypocrisy of others? Didst thou never observe, what great
Opposition

Opposition is made by some Men, against some of the clearest Truths of Christianity; who yet seem very fond of other Truths, that are not so clear, and lye not so level to human Capacities? And didst thou never take notice, how strict some Men are in some Things, who yet allow themselves in the Breach of very plain and very weighty Precepts? As for Instance, the Doctrine of the Trinity we see unanimously acknowledged by many Thousands among us, when the Divine Authority of Christ's Ministers, and the Right of their Maintenance meets with many Opposers in all Places: And some Men can preach and pray from Morning 'till Night, and talk Scripture to each other with much seeming Seriousness, when like the Pharisees of Old they will embrace any fair Occasion that is offered, to devour the House of a poor Widow or Orphan, or to exalt themselves somewhat higher in the World. And what dost thou think is the Reason of these Things? The same without doubt, that hindered the Jews of Old from receiving Christ: And if these Truths which they profess to believe, and these Christian Duties which they are constant in, did as much oppose their Worldly Interests, and Fleshly Lusts, as the acknowledging of Jesus to be the Christ, did oppose the Interests and Lusts of the Unbelieving *Jews*, they would quickly discover the Truth of it, by falling away from those Truths and those Duties, if not also from the whole Religion. Not that I believe, that they have been meer Dissemblers from their first Profession, or that they are, and have been so zealous in some Things meerly for the com-

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passing Worldly Ends, without any Conviction of the Truth or Goodness of them, (for I doubt not but many of them have meant well from the very beginning) but that those naughty and corrupt Affections, which being unrenounced, did so fatally prejudice the *Jews* against the Person of Christ, do as strongly prejudice Them against a great Part of his Doctrine. Those corrupt Affections, which they should have renounced at their first Setting out, are like a thick Cloud upon the Eyes of their Minds, not suffering them to discern those Truths, which to resigned Men are as manifest as the Sun at Noon-day; and as a strong Byass upon their Wills, drawing them aside from those good Paths which they have a Desire to Walk in. They purpose well in the general, like the rich Man before spoken of, when he came to Christ; and they do well in those Things that oppose not their inordinate Affections; but when they are to learn those Duties, to which their Lusts will not be reconciled, either they are not able to understand them, or have not the Power to practice them; as the Wolf in the Fable, that was set to School to read, could make no Word of all the Letters, but a Lamb, because of his Appetite to the Flesh of that harmless Creature: So they can understand, approve, and follow nothing but what they love and are inclined to; or however, nothing that crosses their Affections and Inclinations. I will conclude therefore (and I think I have good Reason for it) that if we Desire and are resolved to be Christians, we must in the first Place renounce our Selves, and entirely put off our carnal Lusts and

and Worldly Affections : Our Desires and Resolutions will be vain, and come to nought, if we fail to do it. We may purpose well, and perhaps do many good Things, though we do omit it : We may make a fair Shew for a while, and mount up to Heaven in our own Thoughts, and in the Opinion of the World; but like as an unwise Builder, that raises a very fair Structure upwards, not having laid a good and firm Foundation, will in a little time be convinced of this Error, by its Ruin ; so when a Time of Tryal and Temptation comes, our own Fall will shew us ours : When the Winds blow, and Rains fall, and the Floods come, our pretty Frame of Religion will come to Ruin, and our high-raised Hopes will perish together with it. Now after this, I suppose, I need not tell thee that I have insisted so much upon this Particular with great Reason.

§ 2. It remains, That I endeavour briefly to beget a good Opinion in thee of the Duty I have been speaking of ; to shew thee, that it is not such an unreasonable Thing as some Men fancy it, to be obliged to it ; and that Christ cannot reasonably be thought a hard Master for laying it upon us. For surely,

1. He that hath laid nothing upon us, but what our State and Condition, and his own Design of Love and Mercy towards us, did make necessary, cannot be judged hard or cruel to us. And hath Christ required any thing more in this Matter? No undoubtedly ; he could not give us Health and Life (how much soever he desired it) without removing our Diseases : He could not be the Author of Salvation to us, without

taking away that which was our Ruin and Destruction. And what was our Disease and Ruin, but an inordinate and immoderate Love of our Selves and our Fellow Creatures, whereby we fell away from God, to be as Gods our Selves, to please our Selves, to provide for our Selves, to do our own Wills, and to satisfy our own Desires without Restraint or Comptrol? Now what is it that we would have, when we quarrel with Christ and call this Commandment grievous? Would we have our Health and our Desires too? Would we live and dye also? Would we serve God a little, and our selves much more? Or would we serve him so far only, as we shall please our selves, and have that be taken for all the Service that we owe him? If thou thinkest this to be unreasonable, as thou canst not but do; thou must needs acknowledge it to be necessary that thou shouldest be taken from thyself, and all Worldly Things, that thou mightest serve thy God. But besides,

2. We cannot reasonably look upon Him as a hard Master, who submitted himself to that which he has imposed upon us, being himself the greatest Example of Self-denial, and forsaking all, that ever was. What thinkest thou of his appearing in our frail Flesh, of his low Estate in the World, of his Pain and Travail, of his Thorny Crown and Cross? Was there not Self-denial in all this, and such as Angels and Men may justly wonder and be astonished at for ever? *He, who being in the Form of God, thought it no Robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no Reputation, and took*

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took upon him the Form of a Servant, and was made in the Likeness of a Man, and being found in Fashion as a Man, humbled himself and became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross, Phil 2. v. 6, 7, 8. He who might have commanded all the Riches, and Glory of the World, as being the Lord of all, became poor, that by his Poverty we might be made Rich, 2 Cor. 8. v. 9. He, who made all Mankind to serve and please him, pleased not himself, but became a Servant for our Good, Rom. 15. v. 3. He, who could have had more than twelve Legions of Angels for his Guard, Matth. 26. v. 53. yielded his Cheeks to be smitten, his Face to be spit upon, his Back to be scourged, his Hands and Feet to be nailed to an infamous Tree, and his Side and Heart to be pierced by the vilest Sinners, whom with one Word of his Mouth he might have turn'd into Hell. Thus did our great and good Master deny himself, and forsake all: And can we, poor worthless Wretches think it much to deny our vile Selves, and to forsake those little Things, which we call our own, for his Sake, and in Obedience to his Command? Had he dealt with us, as those that once sat in Moses's Chair did with their Disciples, laying heavy Burdens upon them, and grievous to be born, which they themselves would not touch with one of their Fingers, Matth. 23. v. 4. We might have had some seeming Cause of Complaint; but, since he himself hath born the Burden, which he hath laid upon us, yea, and a far greater, we are most unreasonable People, if we open our Mouths against him: He is too soft and delicate a Ser-
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want surely, that would fare better than his Lord, or be exempted from that Work, which his Lord disdaineth not to put his Hand unto. But,

3. I beseech thee, Brother, tell me what it is which thou judgest hard and unreasonable in this Commandment. Is it that we should believe our selves to be what we really are, and that we should demean our selves in the World accordingly? Is it that we, who do own our selves to be Nothing of our selves, and to have Nothing of our selves, should be as Nothing to our selves, and challenge no Propriety in our selves; but in Subordination to Him of whom we are, and from whom we have received all? Is it that He who hath made us for himself, and without any other Motive than what was in himself, and who hath freely given us all we do possess, will dispose of Us, and all we have according to his Pleasure? Is it that we should prefer Him before our Selves, and his Will before our own, and be ready and willing to part with all that he hath given us, when ever he is pleased to call for it? Is it that we should be content to receive Evil from him as well as Good, when he shall see it fit for his own Glory and our greater Good? I dare say, that there is nothing in all this, that thou wilt except against; and this is all that is requir'd of thee. But yet further;

4. Suppose it appear after all, that what is here required, is not only just and reasonable, but hugely profitable and advantagious for us; may we not justly look upon them to be very unseasonable, that do quarrel with it? And truly thus

thus it is, and thus it will appear to be, upon very little Consideration; It is no small Advantage, to be at liberty to obey God intirely, and to be able to do it with Ease, with Delight and Pleasure: It is no little Benefit to be out of the Reach of the Devil's Malice, and of all those dangerous Weapons wherewith he assaults and destroys poor Souls. And this we shall infallibly obtain by the Practice and Performance of this one Duty. For what is it, that indisposes us to the Service of God; that makes his Righteous and Holy Laws to be grievous and uneasy to us, but our taking upon us to be something of our selves, and to dispose of our selves according to our own Wills? What is it that gives the Devil so much Advantage over us, but our disorderly Passions and Affections? And whence have all his Temptations their Force and Power, and all his Artifices their Success, but from our inordinate Love of our Selves and these worldly Things? And therefore when we have put off this Love, and banished these things from our Hearts, as we are taught to do, we have disarmed our Enemy, or taken off the Edge of all his Weapons; we have baffled his accursed Policies, and secured our selves from his Devices. Men may talk of Riches, and Honours, and fleshly Pleasures, as long as they please, to those that are dead; and they may threaten them with Reproaches, and Pains, and other evil Things, till they have wearied themselves, and not find Them moved in the least with it; and no less unmoveable shall We be, to all the Temptations of the Devil, if we be but perfectly mortified and resigned. These are great Advan-

Advantages; but there is yet one more, no less considerable in the Esteem of some Men, viz. That this will raise us up above all the Troubles, Perplexities and Sorrows of this miserable World; so that let what will come upon us here, it shall never be able to hurt us. For whence have all the evil Things of the World (as we are wont to call them) their Sting and Edge, but from our unrenounced Selves, our unmortified Lusts and Passions? We will be something, we will do every thing, and every thing must be as we will have it; but in the Event we find we are nothing, and that we can do nothing, and the stubborn things will not comply with us; and therefore we are Troubled, we are in Pain, we are Overwhelmed with Grief and Sorrow. This is an Evil that hath no Remedy but Self-denial, and Resignation to God; and this is a Remedy that never fails. When we have put off our selves, as we ought, and disengaged our Affections from all earthly Things, and can give God leave to dispose of his own Creatures, and to govern his own World; Then we shall be in Peace, then we shall be happy, and not 'till then; then nothing can go against us, because we shall be willing to comply with every thing. By this time I hope I have perfectly reconciled thee to this Duty, and that thou art resolved to put it in Practice. It remains now, that I shew thee, as briefly as may be, how to do it. And,

§ 3. Because thou wilt certainly meet with many and great Difficulties in thy first Endeavours; and the Difficulties will be the more and the greater, by how much the more thou hast loved

loved thy self and the World formerly ; and hast been accustomed to please thy self, and to indulge thy Affections ; it will be necessary,

1. That thou enter upon the Practice of it, with the strongest Convictions that possibly can be, both of the Necessity and Reasonableness of it : And that thou arm thy self with such Considerations as may beat down all Opposition, and effectually encourage thee against all the Difficulties thou canst encounter with. To this purpose thou mayst make use of all that I have already said, and of many other Things, which my Design will not permit me to give an account of. And after this manner mayst thou discourse with thy own Heart concerning it : ‘ I am told, ‘ That I must deny myself, and forsake the ‘ World, and take up my Cross, if I will be a ‘ true Christian : I am told it by Christ himself, ‘ and if I do not believe him, Why do I call him ‘ my Lord, and profess to trust in him as my ‘ Saviour ? I know that his Words have been ‘ confirmed, and are confirmed daily by a thousand Instances : Nay, I my self am an unhappy ‘ Instance of the Truth of them, having made ‘ but little Progress in Christian Knowledge, and ‘ less in Christian Virtue ; meerly for Want of a ‘ serious Regard unto them. But if I do believe ‘ them, Why do I not practise accordingly ? Does ‘ not my everlasting Happiness depend upon my ‘ being a Christian indeed ? And can I reasonably stick at any thing that is needful for the ‘ securing my self of that ? Is it fit that such ‘ a poor derivative Thing as I am, should take ‘ upon me to be absolute and independent ? What ‘ have I done for my self heretofore, and what ‘ can

' can I do for my self hereafter, that I should
 ' presume to please myself, or seek myself in any
 ' thing? I cannot add one Inch to my Stature,
 ' I cannot make one Hair white or black; I
 ' cannot do myself the least Good, nor remove
 ' from myself the lightest Evil; and shall I take
 ' upon me to do my own Will without Respect
 ' to him, by whom alone I am, and without
 ' whose Influence and Blessing I can do nothing?
 ' And what is the World that I should set my
 ' Heart upon it, and prefer it before my God
 ' and Saviour? Did my Love of it ever do
 ' me any Good; or will it do me any without
 ' God's Blessing; or when I am to leave it;
 ' that I should cleave at present so close unto it?
 ' I know that it is God alone that gives me any
 ' Portion in it, that gives me any Comfort by
 ' it; and I know that he can deprive me of both
 ' when he pleases; And therefore I shall be, not
 ' only a Rebel, but a Fool, if I resign not myself
 ' and it to him, and say not, whatever is laid
 ' upon me, *It is the Lord, let him do what-*
 ' *soever seemeth good unto him.* Come there-
 ' fore, O my Heart, let us be no longer Re-
 ' bels against Heaven, and Enemies to our own
 ' Happiness: We are not our own, we are not
 ' the World's, but we are God's, we are Christ's,
 ' and therefore let God dispose of us as he will,
 ' and let him give those Worldly Things to whom
 ' he pleases, so that we may have his Favour,
 ' and enjoy it for ever. O naughty self! How
 ' do I detest thee, for taking so much upon thee,
 ' as thou hast done hitherto? O vain, O transi-
 ' tory World! I abhor thee, I renounce thee ut-
 ' terly: Court me no more with thy sottish
 ' Pleasures, with thy glittering Bravery, with thy
 ' deceitful

‘deceitful Shews; I am now dying, and I will
‘be for ever dead unto thee, that I may follow
‘Christ, and live unto my God. Favour these
‘good Desires, favour them with thy Grace, O
‘my God; and suffer not a Soul, that earnestly
‘aspires towards thee, to fall short of thee.’
With these, and such like Thoughts, thou wilt
do well to enter upon the Practice of this Duty.
But then, I advise thee,

2. To do as much as thou canst, to keep
these and the like Thoughts continually in thy
Mind. However, fail not to begin every Day
with them. When thou first beholdest the Light
in the Morning, after thou hast sent up thy Heart
to God in some short Acknowledgments of his
Mercy towards thee; tell thy Heart, That thou
hast by God’s Goodness another Day added to thy
Life, which thou must imploy for him and his
Service, who hath bestowed it on thee; and not
for the pleasing of thy self, and the satisfying
of thy Lusts; and charge it, as it will answer
for it at the great Day, that it take Care to do
it accordingly. The like Thoughts and Resoluti-
ons will do well again about Noon, and indeed at
any time of the Day; and the oftner they return
into thy Mind, the more easily and speedily wilt
thou come to that perfect Resignation, which thou
art concerned to aim at. But yet further,

3. It will behove thee to be frequent in Ex-
ercises of Mortification and Self-denial. Restrain
thy wonted Liberties, and deny thy self thy ac-
customed Satisfactions; acquaint thy self sometimes
with Hardships, and turn not always away from
Sufferings; remembring that thou art a Soldier
under the Ensign of the Cross, and therefore must
not

not be nice and tender, soft and delicate. Mortify thy Senses, and accustom them to those things that are least agreeable ; knowing that there are some Offices to be done sometimes by a Christian, such as Visiting poor Prisoners, and Dressing of poor People's Sores, &c. which Men of a nice and squeamish Sense will hardly be persuaded to perform. Mortify thy Passions likewise, and keep them strictly within their Bounds ; for as he is a Beast that is a Slave to Sense, so is he a Fool that is governed by his Passions. In one Word, consider thy self well, mark thy Temper, thy Inclinations and Affections, and keep thyself and them under constant Discipline and Correction. Hast thou a trifling and wanton Spirit ? Art thou much delighted with the Railleries, Drolleries, Sportings and Jestings of wanton Fancies and loose Tongues ? Fail not, I beseech thee, to restrain thy Inclinations ; avoid the Company of light and vain Persons, and turn away thy Thoughts from trivial Matters, to the Concernments of a Soul that must shortly appear before the Bar of a just and holy God ; remembering that the Master whom thou professest to serve, was a serious, grave, and useful Person, and not a Buffoon, or Stage-player. It was the Grief of a devout Man many Years ago (*St. Bernard*) to observe the Lightness, Laughter, and Security of many Christians ; and his continual Fear that he should see them forsaken of the Divine Grace, of which they shewed themselves to be unmindful. What Grief, what Fear, dost thou think, would have possessed his Heart, if he had lived in this Age, and had been a Witness of our Vanity in this kind ? We live in a merry World at present, and nothing is sacred

cred or weighty enough to escape our Sportings : But believe it, God will shortly spoil our vain Mirth, and make us serious whether we will or not. Art thou soft and slothful, inclined to Sensuality and Voluptuousness ? Rouse up thyself, and be always doing ; take up with coarse Fare, fast often, lye hard, go frequently to the House of Mourning ; and keep him continually in thine Eye, who after a Life of continued Travel in doing Good, had no easier a Bed than a Cross to rest upon. Do the Riches of the World please thee ? Refuse them when they are offered, or let the Hand of Liberality immediately distribute them to those that want them ; and keep in mind those good Men, whom thy Bible tells thee of, who, though they could have enriched themselves by Miracles, yet continued poor, and had not so much as an House to put their Heads in. Do Worldly Honours tickle thee, and the Applauses of Men delight thee ? Retire from publick Employments, and hide thyself in the Meanness and Obscurity of a Country Life. Be exact and open in the Practice of those Virtues which are most unfashionable, and which the Generality of Men have a mean Opinion of ; and forget not, That there was a Person once in the World, who was able to have governed the whole World, that led the greatest Part of his Life in the Country Villages, and among poor People, and would not have his great and mighty Works to be publicly spoken of. This is to practise Self-denial ; and by these and the like Practices, thou wilt in a short time arrive at that perfect Resignation, to which I desire to lead thee. But then in the last Place,

4. Be sure, That in these Practices, and in whatever else thou dost, thou take Nothing to thy Self; but refer thy Self and All to Almighty God. Thou mayst begin well, my Brother, *viz.* in Renouncing thy Self, and yet mayst End ill, *viz.* in that very Self, which thou didst at first Renounce: And this thou dost, if thou dost do these Things for the Satisfaction of thy Self, and seekest thy own Glory in them. Forget not therefore this last Advice; 'tis not for thy Self, but for God, that thou must be thus imployed; that thou mayst be entirely resigned to God, and be for ever united with God. Thou must be as nothing to thy Self, and the World must be as nothing to thee, that God may be all in all. Therefore I advise thee in the third Place,

C H A P. III.

Sect. 1. Containing a Third Advice, to give up our Selves, our Souls and Bodies intirely to God, with several Arguments to persuade us to it.

Sect. 2. Containing several Directions how to put this Advice of giving our Selves to God in Practice.

§ 1. **T**O give up thy Self, thy Soul and Body, all the Faculties of the one, and all the Members of the other, together with all
 thou

thou hast in the World, wholly and entirely to God through Christ Jesus, uniting thy self to him in the closest Manner, and by the strongest Bonds that possibly thou canst, resolving to be his, and only his for ever. To make thee capable of doing this, was the Design of my former Advice, and if thou canst practise that well, thou wilt readily follow this: For those Bonds being broken which kept thee from God, thou wilt as naturally incline to him, as Fire does ascend upwards, when that which depresses it, or keeps it down, is removed from it; and therefore, the fewer Words may serve to enforce this Advice upon thee. The Heads of some few Considerations I shall briefly offer thee, which thy own Thoughts may work upon, and enlarge as thou seest good. In the first Place then,

1. Thou must and dost acknowledge thy self to be God's Creature. He is the only Spring and Root of thy Being and Life. And is it not just then, that thou shouldest be, and live to him, and to him alone? Art thou not a very unreasonable Creature, if thou refusest to be his, by whom alone thou art, and without whom thou canst not be at all? Yes surely.

2. Thou must acknowledge God to be the only Supporter, Preserver, and Maintainer of thy Life and Being; thou livest by him as surely, as the Tree by its Root, and if he withdraw his quickening Influence and Power but one Moment, thou art dead without Remedy. Those Necessaries for the preserving of Life, which the World furnishes thee withal, are all fallen from him; and all the Virtue and Efficacy they have

have for that purpose, is no less from him. It is he that refreshes thee by Heat and Light, that nourishes thee by Meat and Drink, that Cures thee by Medicine and Physick, and without him thou couldst have no Nourishment, no Health, no Refreshment. And with what Reason then canst thou withhold thy self from him? Surely with none at all.

3. Thou believest God to be thy Saviour, *i. e.* that he hath given thee his only begotten Son to deliver thee from Sin and Death, and to bring thee to everlasting Life; and that as he in our Nature hath offered up himself a Sacrifice upon the Cross for thy Sins, so he hath undertaken to bring back thy Erring and Lost Soul to God. And therefore thou art a most unworthy and ungrateful Wretch, if thou wilt not comply with his gracious Undertaking, but refusest to be Christ's, that thou mayst be God's for ever.

4. Thou dost believe and acknowledge, that for this End he hath taken Possession of thee by his Holy Spirit, who is continually working in thee, to dispose thee by putting off thyself, and all selfish Inclinations and Desires, and by abandoning all that is dear to thee, to offer up thyself, as *Abraham* offered up his *Isaac* a Sacrifice unto God. And therefore thou canst not without the Guilt of the most abominable Sacrilege, take upon thee to be any Thing, or to do any Thing, but for God, and to God. See *1 Cor. 6. v. 19, 20.*

5. Thou hast made a Shew, an outward Profession of giving up thyself to God, and being God's long ago. This thou didst at thy Baptism,

tism, when renouncing the Devil, the World, and the Flesh, thou didst give up thyself to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and this Profession thou hast (probably) renewed often at the Table of the Lord, where commemorating, and giving Thanks to God for the greatest Expression of the greatest Love to Man that ever was, *thou didst offer and present thyself, thy Soul and Body to be a Reasonable, Holy, and Lively Sacrifice to the Lord;* and thou hast seemed to the World to this very Day, to own all this. And therefore, if thou art not, if thou wilt not be God's, after all this, by the full Consent of thy Heart, thou art the falsest and vilest Hypocrite upon Earth, and an accursed Traytor to thy great Creator, to thy Gracious and Loving Saviour. To all this thou mayst add,

6. That this is that Holiness, which the Scriptures so frequently recommend unto thee, and without which thou canst not hope to see the Lord. When things are separated from common Uses, and are given up to God, so as never to be made Use of but for him, or in his Worship or Service, they are called Holy Things; and so indeed they are, so far as Things can be: Thus when thou hast separated thy self, taken off thy Heart from all created Things, and hast given up thy self to God, to be his, and only his, in faithful Service and Obedience for ever, thou art Holy, and not 'till then; and if thou thinkest otherwise thou dost dangerously deceive thy self. Add to this,

7. That this is thy Perfection, and the greatest Perfection thou art capable of. Thou canst do
nothing

nothing better, than to resign thy self to God; and thou canst not possibly be in any better State, than in a State of pure Resignation to him. And therefore in the last Place,

8. Thou mayst safely believe, that this is thy Happiness, and the greatest Happiness thou canst attain unto. The Truth is, these three Words, Holiness, Perfection, and Happiness, though they differ in Sound, are all the very same in Sense and Signification. He that says, that the Saints in Heaven are Blessed, says no other Thing than this, that they are made perfect; and he that says, that they are made perfect, says no other Thing than this, that they are fully and compleatly Holy; and he that speaks this, says no more, than that they are entirely God's, that they are perfectly disengaged from every Thing that might withhold them in the least from him, and so united to him, that nothing can separate or dissolve the Union; so that all that I would now persuade thee to, is but to make thy self as Perfect and Happy as thou canst be: And methinks in this Case it should be no hard Matter to prevail with thee, when thou canst not but see thy Interest in that which is recommended to thee as thy Duty; it is impossible, if thou art the Man I now suppose thee to be, but thou must yield thy full Consent unto it. And therefore I leave these Things to thy serious Thoughts, and proceed to give thee some Directions how to perform this good and happy Work.

§ 2. That thou art concerned to take the greatest Care that may be, to do it well, I presume I need not tell thee; and therefore, as I do

do earnestly recommend the following Directions to thee, so I hope thou wilt not fail to practise them. And because it is a Matter of great Moment in every Thing to begin well, I advise thee,

1. To separate thyself for some Time from the World. Retire into thy Closet, or into some secret Place, where no Eye may see thee, and nothing divert or disturb thee. And when thou art there, consider, that thou art come thither about a Business of the greatest Importance to thee; thou art to give thyself to God, to unite thyself most firmly to him; but of thyself, and without God's special Grace thou art not able to do it: If he does not draw thee, if he does not overcome thy Stony Heart by the sweet and powerful Influences of his Love, thou wilt make but faint and feigned Offers of thyself unto him. And therefore thou must not fail in the first Place,

1. To fall upon thy Knees, and with the greatest Reverence and Submission, to acquaint him with the Desires of thy Soul, and to beg his favourable acceptance of them, and his Blessing upon them. And if thou knowest not how to do it better, thou mayst make Use of this form of Words:

' My Lord, and my God, thou knowest the
' very bottom of my Heart, and my Desires are
' not hid from thee: I am encouraged by my
' own happy Experience of thy Goodness, as
' well as by thy gracious Declarations of thy
' Will, to present myself before thee, not-
' withstanding I know myself to be unworthy
' of the least Favour from thee. I am ashamed
F when

when I think how I have demeaned my self
hitherto towards thee; and that I have lived
so long a Stranger, yea an Enemy to thee,
taking upon me to dispose of myself, and to
please myself in the main Course of my Life,
without the least Regard to thee. I abhor
myself for it, and acknowledge that I deserve
for ever to be abandoned by thee; but thou
hast not dealt with me according to my De-
serts, Blessed be thy Goodness for it; and
therefore, I now desire unfeignedly to return
unto thee, and renouncing all Interest and
Propriety in myself, and detesting all my
former ungodly Practices, I desire to give up
myself wholly and entirely to thee: I would
be thine, and only thine, in all Love and
Service, in perfect Submission and Obedience
for ever; but, I know I am nothing, and can
do nothing of my self; and if ever I am thine,
as I desire to be, I must be indebted wholly
to thy Goodness for it. O my God, my
Saviour, and my Sanctifier, turn not away thy
Face from a poor Soul that seeks thee, and
Places all his Confidence and Comfort in thee:
But as thou hast kindled these good Desires
in my Heart, so favour them with thy Bless-
ing, and confirm, increase, and satisfy them.
Reject not that poor Gift which I would
make of myself unto thee, and enable me
to make it in such a manner, that it may be
pleasing and acceptable in thy Sight. Lord,
hear me, help me, and shew Mercy to me,
for Christ Jesus's Sake, *Amen.*

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When thou hast thus offered thy Desires to God, rise from thy Knees, and either walking or sitting, as thou thinkest best,

2. Begin to excite, and stir up thy Soul, to a perfect Surrender of itself, by the Arguments before laid down, pressing them upon thyself with all thy Might. And that they may have as great an Influence upon thee as is possible, thou mayst imagine that thou hearest Almighty God speaking to thee from Heaven in this Manner: ‘ Consider thy self, O Man, and take Notice what thou art, and what good Things thou dost possess; look upon thy Body, and all its useful Members; consider thy Soul, and all its Faculties and Powers, and observe their several Motions and Operations; and tell me whence thou art, and to whom thou art indebted for them. Look upon the World that furnishes thee with all Things necessary and fitting for thee; and tell me who was the Framer of it, and who made it useful and serviceable to thee. Canst thou deny, that I have done all this? And wherefore, then, hast thou lifted up thyself against me, and presumed to act as if thou hadst no Dependance upon me, or Obligation to me? If thou sowest thy Seed in thy Field, thou expectest to reap the Crop; if thou didst nourish and provide for a poor Beast, thou thinkest that thou mayst use him at thy Pleasure; if thou makest an Instrument to work withal, thou challegest a Right to dispose of it? But I have maintained and preserved a Creature, [*hear, and be ashamed of thyself*] and thou wilt allow me no Right

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“ and Title to him and his Service. Tell me,
 “ O thou unjust, and ungrateful Wretch, did I
 “ ever give thee Liberty to dispose of thy self?
 “ Did I ever give thee Occasion to think that
 “ I made no Reckoning of thee, or that I
 “ expected no Acknowledgment from thee?
 “ No, wretched Creature, thou didst know
 “ that I made thee for my self, and that I
 “ would not give away my Interest in thee;
 “ that I put a great Value upon thee; and
 “ that as I made thee capable of serving me,
 “ so I expected and desired it from thee: And
 “ therefore did I love thee from the Beginning,
 “ and bestowed innumerable Gifts upon thee: I
 “ gave thee all Things that were fitting for thee,
 “ and assured thee that I would withhold no
 “ good Thing from thee: Yea, I gave thee my
 “ self in mine own only begotten Son, who
 “ descended out of my Bosom to assure thee
 “ of my Love, as well as to convince thee,
 “ that thou hadst deserved my Hatred. Thou
 “ canst rage against a poor Servant that neg-
 “ lects thy Business, and seems to slight thee;
 “ yea, thy poor Neighbour, that hath no Depen-
 “ dence upon thee, shall feel the Effects of
 “ thy Displeasure, if he chance to wrong thee:
 “ They must seek thy Pardon, and crouch
 “ before thee, and think themselves beholden
 “ to thee, if by so doing they can make their
 “ Peace: And yet I have humbled myself to
 “ thee, thou vile Worm, and have not spared
 “ my own Son, that I might spare thee, and
 “ bring thee to a due Sense of thy Duty to
 “ me. Heaven and Earth can witness for me,
 “ that I have stooped low enough, in desiring the
 “ Friend-

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Friendship of rebellious Dust and Ashes ; and
they shall also witness the Justice of my Se-
verity to thee, if so much Love and Conde-
scension will not work upon thee.' Here
thou mayst pause a While, and observe how thy
Soul is affected with these Things ; and then
thou mayst imagine again, that thou hearest Al-
mighty God speaking further to thee, and more
fully relating the wonderful History of his Love
in Christ Jesus. And after he hath given thee
an Account of his mean Birth, of his humble
and painful Life, of his bloody and cruel Death,
and his Design and End in all this, proceeding
to shew thee with how much Love, and with
what tender Regard for thee he left this
World, and ascended to his Father : And how
that after he had done and suffered in his
own Person, as much as was necessary and fit-
ting for him ; he sent the Holy Ghost to com-
plete the great and good Work of thy eternal
Salvation. And then imagine that he tells thee
what that blessed and holy Spirit hath for his
Part done for thee ; what Gifts he hath bestow-
ed, what Wonders he hath wrought, what Arts
and Methods he hath used, and with what Good-
ness, and Patience, and Long-suffering, to bring
thee to a right Understanding, and a real Sense of
all his Love, and of all thy Duty to him ; and to
excite, encourage, and enable thee to the Perfor-
mance of it : And in the End, bespeaking thee
in this or the like Manner : ' And now, Wretch
' that thou art, must all this Love be lost upon
' thee ; and must I lose thee for ever, after all
' that I have done for thee ? Will nothing work
' upon thy hard Heart ; upon thy proud and stub-

‘ born Will? Will nothing conquer the perverseness of thy Spirit? Not the Commands of thy Maker, not the Death of thy Saviour, not the good Motions and Inspirations of thy Sanctifier? Canst thou withstand my Power, that thou art thus obstinate against my Goodness? And if thou wilt not suffer me to save thee, dost thou think that I am not able to destroy thee? O foolish Creature, and unwise! Consider these things seriously, and as thou oughtest; remember what thou hast done, and what unreasonable Courses thou hast taken hitherto, and proceed no farther in thy Folly, but return to that Love that calls thee, that intreats thee, that would save thee.’ Here thou mayst pause a little, as before: And if any thing more be necessary to shame and humble thee, to soften and melt thee; Thou mayst turn thyself to consider thy own Engagements, and to charge upon thyself that monstrous Perfidiousness which thou hast, and wilt continue to be guilty of, if thou dost now withstand the Calls of God. And that thy Perfidiousness may appear the more detestable, thou mayst consider in the last place, what that is which thou hast been engaged, and art now called upon to do; It is not to do any thing unjust, dishonest or unreasonable: It is not to destroy thyself, or to make thyself miserable: But on the contrary, it is to do the justest, the most reasonable, and the best thing that thou art capable of doing: It is to return to the Author of thy Being, and thereby serve the End of thy Creation, and consult the only Happiness and Rest of thy Soul: It is to unite thyself to the supream Good, to make thyself his, and to make him thine for ever. And is this
a thing

a thing so much against thee, that thou needest so much Invitation and Persuasion to it? 'O my Soul! my foolish Soul, mayst thou say, what canst thou say for thyself in this Case? Is there any Excuse for thy Folly? Any Plea for thy Wickedness? No, far be it from thee to seek for any: Let us rather amend what we have done amiss, and be more wise for the time to come. Happy had we been, if we had needed from the Beginning, so much Invitation to destroy our selves; but since we could do that upon very little or none at all, let us no longer withstand this which is so earnest and importunate with us to save our selves.' Then turning thyself to God, in whose Presence thou hast been all this while, thou mayst speak (as I hope thou wilt be able with Truth to do) in this manner to him: 'I am overcome, I am overcome, O God, I can no longer withstand thy mighty Love; I must, I do yield myself a Captive to it. I am thine, I do acknowledge, by all Right, and I will be thine for ever, by the full Consent of my Heart. I can do no less in return to that wonderful Love thou hast shewed me; and I can do no more. Oh! let this little that I can do, be accepted by thee, and receive me for thine own: Take possession of me by thy Spirit, and let it preserve me for ever to thyself, according as I do now sincerely resign up myself, and all I have to thee. Then,

3. Casting thyself upon the Ground, say thus: And say it with all thy Heart and Soul:

'To God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, my Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, do I give my Self, Soul and Body, and all that belongs unto

' me, to be guided, governed, and disposed of
 ' according to his Will, and to his Honour
 ' and Glory ; and may he be a Witness to
 ' this my Act, which I promise never to re-
 ' voke ; and may I never obtain the least Fa-
 ' vour from him, if I do it not with an upright
 ' Heart, and an unfeigned Purpose to make it
 ' good to my Life's End. Thou art my Witness,
 ' O my God, be thou also my Helper with thy
 ' continued Grace, and so shall I be faithful
 ' to thee according to my Heart's Desire. *Amen,*
 ' *Amen.*

But then,

4. As in Matters of the World, that which
 is done in private between Man and Man, must in
 some Cases receive a further Confirmation, by such
 Solemnities as are appointed by human Laws ;
 so that which thou hast done thus between God
 and thy own Soul, must be farther confirmed,
 and as it were compleated, by those Solemnities
 which the Laws of God do require ; and
 therefore fail not to take the first Opportunity
 that is offered thee to go to the Table of the
 Lord ; and having prepared thyself at home by
 such Meditations as I have before taught thee,
 and by reading some good Book of the Holy
 Sacrament, (such as Dr. *Patrick's* Christian Sa-
 crifice, which I desire may find a Place both
 in thy Closet and in thy Heart) do thou there
 renew what thou hast done in private ; and as
 it were in publick Court, avow it and confirm
 it. At that Holy Table God will not fail to
 meet thee, attended with an innumerable Com-
 pany of Holy Angels, and he strictly requires and
 expects it from thee. And therefore, when thou
 art

art at that Table, and beholdest what manner of Love is there shewed thee, and which cannot but draw thy very Heart from thee, if thou dost consider it aright; remember what thou art to do, and let thy Heart speak in this Manner to Almighty God: ' There is all the Reason ' in the World, O Heavenly Father, that I ' should give up myself entirely to thee, since ' thou hast not with-holden thy Son, thy only ' Son from me. There is all the Reason in ' the World, O my Blessed Saviour, that I should ' surrender myself, and all I have, into thy ' Hands, since thou didst offer thyself a Sacrifice upon the Cross for me, and dost now offer these Holy Pledges of the all sufficient ' Virtue of that Sacrifice to me. There is all ' the Reason in the World, that I should ' resign myself to thee, O Holy and Blessed ' Spirit, since thou dost offer thyself to be a ' Principle of Holiness and Life in me. And ' therefore, as I do now accept, with all Thankfulness, those great and inestimable Favours, ' and do declare my acceptance of them in the ' Sight of these thy Servants, and all thy Holy ' Angels here present, by receiving those Tokens ' and Pledges of them, according to thy Command and Institution; so do I give up my ' self and all I have to thee, and declare it ' before the Face of all these Witnesses; and ' I earnestly desire, that this my poor Gift, even ' my unworthy self, may be accepted through ' the perfect Sacrifice and Oblation of my dearest ' Saviour, and be sanctified by the Holy Ghost, ' and be owned by my God, to the everlasting praise of the Holy, Blessed, and Undivided

‘ Trinity, whose I am, and whose I will be for
 ‘ ever and ever. *Amen, Amen.*

But then,

5. When thou art gone from this Holy Table, Retire as soon as possibly thou canst, and whilst these good Thoughts are warm in thy Breast, into thy Closet: And there take the Book of thy Spiritual Accounts into thy Hand, (for I would not have thee to be without such a Book, for recording these Things wherein the Welfare of thy Soul is greatly concerned, lest thou be condemned by the Care and Exactness of those whom we are wont to call good Husbands, in Worldly Matters) and with thy Pen write thus: ‘ In such a Year, and such a Month, ‘ and on such a Day, I did through God’s ‘ Grace, with all the Devotion of my Heart ‘ and Soul, make an entire Surrender of my ‘ self, and all Things belonging to me, to Al- ‘ mighty God, protesting and vowing, that he ‘ should have the full Guiding, Governing, and ‘ Disposing of me, and mine for ever.’ And then, that thou mayst have a more distinct Understanding of what thou hast done, and what thou art obliged to do for the Time to come, thou mayst under-write these following particulars, *viz.*

‘ I have given up myself entirely to God; and
 ‘ therefore I must not serve myself, but him all
 ‘ the Days of my Life.

‘ I have given him my Understanding: And
 ‘ therefore my chiefest Care and Study must
 ‘ be to know him, his Nature, his Perfections,
 ‘ his Works, his Will: These must be the
 ‘ Subject of my Meditations Night and Day;

as

‘ as for all other Things, they must be as Dross
‘ and Dung to me; *and the Knowledge of them*
‘ *must be as Loss, for the Excellency of the*
‘ *Knowledge of God in Christ,* Phil. 3. v. 8.
‘ I must believe all his Revelations, and, silenc-
‘ ing all carnal Reasonings against whatsoever
‘ he teaches me, I must rest my self on his
‘ Veracity, being fully persuaded that he can
‘ neither be deceived himself, nor deceive me.
‘ See *Rom. 4. v. 19, 20.*

‘ I have given him my Will, and therefore
‘ I must have no Will of mine own: Whatever
‘ he Wills, I must Will also; I must Will his
‘ Glory in all Things, as he does, and that
‘ must be my chief End in every Thing: I
‘ must prefer it before all desirable Things,
‘ and subordinate my own Desires, Delights
‘ and Satisfactions to it: I must say, as the
‘ *Psalmist did, Whom have I in Heaven but*
‘ *thee? And there is none upon Earth,*
‘ *that I desire besides thee,* Psal. 73. v. 25.
‘ I must do whatsoever God commands me,
‘ and forbear whatever he forbids; and I must
‘ do it for this Reason chiefly, because he does
‘ command or forbid me: Nay, *I must delight*
‘ *to do it,* Psal. 40. v. 8. And it must be to
‘ me *as my Meat and Drink,* John 4. v. 34.
‘ I must consent to suffer whatever he will lay
‘ upon me; and though it may be his Plea-
‘ sure to lay hard Things upon me, and grievous
‘ to be born, yet I must not repine, or murmur,
‘ but with Cheerfulness, Alacrity and Thank-
‘ fulness, I will submit my self to it: Whatever
‘ threatens me, I must say, *It is the Lord, let*
‘ *him do what seemeth him good,* 1 Sam. 3.
‘ v. 18.

v. 18. and whatever befalls me, *I must give Thanks, for that is his Will concerning me in Christ Jesus*, 1 *Thef.* 5. v. 18.

‘I have given him all the Passions and Affections of my Soul; and therefore he must dispose of them, govern, and set Bounds unto them; he must have my Love, my Fear, my Delight, my Joy; and nothing in the World must have any Share in these, or any other of my Affections, but with respect to him, and for his Sake. What he loves, I must love; what he hates, I must hate; what he is well pleased with, I must rejoice in; what he is grieved with, I must mourn for; the Objects of his Pity, I must have Compassion on, and those of his Wrath and Indignation I must be zealous against: And all in such Measures and Degrees as he is pleased to prescribe me.

‘I have given him my Body; and therefore must glorify him with it; I must not dare to abuse it by Gluttony, Drunkenness, Adultery, Fornication, or any other Uncleaness: I must look upon it as his Temple, and therefore must preserve it pure and holy, fit for my God to dwell in. See 1 *Corinth.* 6. v. 19. I must not wrong it by pampering or indulging it; nor by neglecting, nor shewing too much Rigour towards it, in overmuch Fasting, Watching, Labouring, &c. But must keep it, as far as in me lies, Healthy, Vigorous, Active, and fit to do him all manner of Service that he shall call for.

‘I have given him my Senses, my Eyes, my Ears, &c. And therefore, to Good they must be

‘ be always open, but to Evil, and all the Occasions of it, they must be shut.

‘ I have given him all my Members; and therefore they must be no longer *Instruments of Unrighteousness unto Sin*, Rom. 6. v. 13. but Instruments of Righteousness unto God. My Tongue must shew forth his Praise, my Hands must do his Work, and my Foot must carry me with Speed unto it.

‘ I have given him not myself only, but also all that do belong unto me; and therefore my Children, my Friends, my Servants must all be his, if I can make them so.

‘ I have given him all my Worldly Goods, and therefore I must prize them and use them only for him: His House, his Priests, his Poor must have their Portions from me with a willing Mind; and though I have no more than Necessaries for my Life, yet I must be content to part with them, when my Lord shall need them, or command me to resign them.

‘ I have given him my Credit and Reputation; and therefore I must value it, and endeavour to maintain it only in Respect to him, as it may do him Service, and advance his Honour in the World.

‘ I have given him myself and all; and therefore I must look upon myself to be nothing, and to have nothing out of him: He must be the sole Disposer, Governor, and Guide of myself and all: He must be my Portion, and my All.

And then, in the Close thou mayst add this:

‘ Thus have I given myself to God, and to all this have I bound my self in the most
‘ solemn

' solemn Manner; and with my own Hand do I
 ' now testify my full Consent unto it, and I am
 ' resolved to make good the Whole, and every
 ' Part of it, God assisting me, to my Life's End.
 ' I doubt not but I shall meet with many Temp-
 ' tations to the contrary; I shall be often told
 ' of my Singularity and Preciseness; and some may
 ' tell me in Kindness, that I do more than is
 ' necessary, and that I must accommodate or fit
 ' myself to this or that Person, Company, Thing,
 ' Custom, &c. But my Answer shall be to
 ' all, I am not my own, I am not for my self,
 ' nor for my Friends, nor for the World, nor
 ' for its Customs; but for my God. I will give
 ' to *Cæsar* what I owe to *Cæsar*; and to God
 ' what I owe to God. The Lord be merciful
 ' to me his unworthy Servant.'

All this, I say, thou wilt do well to write in
 thy Book of Spiritual Accounts; but if thou
 canst not write, fail not to fix it in thy Memory;
 and as often as thou art called to the Table of
 the Lord, take a view of it, or repeat it to
 thyself; and call thyself strictly to an Account
 how thou hast made it good, and how and
 wherein thou hast failed; and give God Thanks
 for what thou hast been able to do, and hum-
 ble thyself before him for all that thou hast
 omitted, confessing it with Sorrow, and earnestly
 begging Pardon for it, renewing thy Resolutions
 and Vows, and imploring a greater Measure
 of his Grace to enable thee to do better for
 the Time to come. But did I say, that thou
 must do this as often as thou art called to the
 Table of the Lord? I must tell thee, that thou
 shouldst do it oftner: Thou shouldst do it once
 a Week

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a Week at least, upon the *Saturday* in the Evening, or early in the Morning on the Lord's-day; for so often at least were the Primitive Christians wont to receive the Holy Sacrament; and that we do it not as often as they did, is not for our Praise or Commendation; and indeed to put off This 'till our usual Times of Communicating, is to put it off to a Time when we can hardly do it well; because many Things will be forgotten by us, or else we shall be overwhelmed with too great a Multitude. There is not one but will find Work enough at the End of one Week, to call to mind, how his Heart has been disposed, his Tongue employed, and what good or evil Deeds he hath done, with the several Circumstances belonging unto them, during that Time; and how imperfect an Account of these Things, then, can they give to themselves, and to Almighty God, who are to look back a full Quarter of a Year, and to call all their Ways to Remembrance? Let this therefore, I pray thee, be at least as often as I have said; and though thou canst not be so happy, as to communicate thus often, yet this will in some Measure supply the Want of it, and put thee into a better Disposition to give thy self to God in the Holy Communion, and to unite thyself more firmly to him. I must confess, I am not able to promise thee, but thou wilt discern many Failings when thou comest thus to examine thy self, tho' thou hast been ever so careful to keep close to God, and to demean thy self as God's: But yet, let not this discourage thee in the least, because thou hast to do with a God that knows thy Frailty,
and

and abounds in Mercy and Compassion towards thee; and as long as thou dost not withdraw thy Heart from him, nor slack thy Endeavours to make good thy Resolutions and Vows, thou mayst rest thyself assured, that thou shalt not want the choicest Tokens of his Love, I mean a daily Supply of Grace, and Strength to obey and please him. Thou mayst feel thy self at first to be weak as a little Child; but be not dismayed at it, for thou wilt find in a little Time, that that Spirit which first breathed into thee this new Life, will preserve and cherish it, and make thee to *grow up to a perfect Man, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ*, Ephes. 4. v. 13.

Thus have I shewed thee, (my dear Brother) how thou mayst become a real Christian, *i. e.* in the Language of the Scripture, *A new Creature in Christ Jesus*, 2 Cor. 5. v. 17. And let me tell thee for thy Comfort, that when these Things are done, thou mayst safely account thy self to be one; and all those Privileges which the Holy Scriptures assure thee do belong to real Christians, thou mayst justly challenge as belonging to thyself. Are they one with Christ? So art thou. Have they the Spirit of Christ? So hast thou. Have they Fellowship with the Father and the Son? So hast thou. Are they the Children of God, Heirs of God, and Co-heirs with Christ? So art thou. This is an happy and honourable Estate, no ambitious Soul can aim at any thing higher, no Heart can desire any thing better. It is that to which all that call themselves Christians do pretend; but they, and they only, that have thus resigned themselves

selves to God, have attained to it. But now I must tell thee, that by how much the greater thy Happiness is in this Estate, by so much the more thou art concerned to take Care that thou fall not away from it, and to use all Diligence to keep thyself in a firm Possession of it; remembering that thou art not yet in Heaven, where there is no falling away from God, but in a Place of manifold Temptations, where many do draw back, and after they *have known the Way of Righteousness, do turn from it*, 2 Peter 2. v. 21. for which purpose I must proceed to give thee some further Directions, but contracting my Thoughts as much as may be, that I may not burden thee with too big a Book

C H A P. IV.

Sect. 1. *Containing the Fourth Advice, To grow in the Knowledge of God and of the Things of God.*

Sect. 2. *Containing several Directions how to improve in all Divine Knowledge.*

§ 1. **T**HOU must endeavour Daily to grow in the Knowledge of God, and to get more clear, distinct, firm, well-settled Apprehensions of the Things of God. The Reason of this Advice is very plain, viz. That the more thou knowest of God, and the more clear thy Apprehensions of Divine Things are, the better

better thou wilt love God, and the more closely will thy Heart cleave unto him. There are some Things indeed of such a Nature, that the less Men know them, the more they Esteem and Love them: Whilst they look upon them at a distance, and know them but imperfectly, they seem great and good, worthy of their Esteem and Love; but when they come to handle them, and know them thoroughly, they are convinced that they deserve neither. But now the Things of God are of another Sort; such is the Perfection of their Nature, that the more they are unfolded to us, the more we admire them, and the more strongly do they draw our Souls towards them: And if there be any Men that do not value them, or are not in love with them, we may be confident that they do not know them. Is it I that speak this? Or doth not the Scripture also speak the same? Why then doth it so often tell us of wicked Men, *That they know not God, that they know not the Way of the Lord, nor the Judgments of their God, Jerem. 5. v. 5. and Chap. 9. v. 3.* And what is it that St. *John* means, when he tells us, *That by this we know that we know him, if we keep his Commandments; He that saith he knoweth him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a Lyar, and the Truth is not in him, 1 John 2. v. 3, 4.* Doth not this imply plainly, that they who know God truly, will obey him, and that the Reason why they do not love and obey him, is their Ignorance of him, or the Imperfection of their Knowledge? Either they know not God at all, or their Knowledge is so weak, so slight, so imperfect, that

that it makes little or no Impression upon their Hearts: Their Conceptions of God are like those Conceits which we have of some Things in our Sleep, which either affect us not at all, or are forgotten by us, as soon as we awake. We believe, and we believe rightly, That the Saints in Heaven shall never fall from God, but will love and serve him for ever, without the least Failing or Imperfection: And what is the Reason of it? Surely it is because they *know him as they are known of him*, 1 Cor. 13. v. 12. Or as St. *John* speaks, *they see him as he is*, 1 John 3. v. 2. *i. e.* They have the clearest, firmest, the most full and comprehensive Knowledge of him, that Creatures can have, by which they are transformed into his Image, and made like unto him. He that does know God truly, does also know himself; and he that does know God and himself truly, cannot but keep himself in a State of Resignation and Subjection to God continually. He will feel those Impressions upon himself, which Holy *Job* did, when God had made himself a little better known unto him, than he was before, [See *Job* 42. v. 6.] and will say from the very bottom of his Heart, as Holy *Job* did; *Behold I am vile*, Chap. 40. v. 4. He will know, that it is not for a Worm, to contend with the Creator of all Things; not for him that was born like a wild Asses Colt, (as one of *Job's* Friends speaks) to presume to find out the Almighty to Perfection. He will feel the Truth of what the *Psalmist* says, *Psal. 9. v. 10. They that know thy Name, will put their Trust in thee:* And will heartily assent to that

Mich. de Montaign. that Saying of a great Man, *That the more we reject our selves, and commit our selves to God, the better it is for us.* He will say as a devout Man once did, *What art thou, O Lord, and what am I?* He will be continually admiring his sovereign Greatness, and will be no less sensible of his own Worthlessness, and Nothingness. He that knows God truly, will also know the World; and he that knows God and the World aright, will never be drawn from God by any of the World's Allurements; he will know, that the World is nothing of it self; and will he set his Heart upon that which is not? He will know, that without God, it can contribute no more to his Happiness, than it did to his Being, which he knows himself indebted only to God for: And can that steal away his Heart from the Author of all Good, which never did nor can bestow the least Good upon thee? How vile doth this Earth seem unto us, when we lift up our Eyes and look upon the Heavens? Surely much more vile will all Things be esteemed by him, whose Soul is possessed with a true Knowledge of the Maker of them. It was therefore a true Saying of a Holy Man of old [St. Austin,] *That no Man loses God, but he that is deceived.* And another Person many Years after him, is said to speak no worse, when being in an Extasy, he cryed out: *O my God! O my Lord! O the God of my Heart! O that all Men did know thee! They would never offend thee, they would ever love thee.* For surely, (as the Author of the *Book of Wisdom* tells us) *To know God is perfect Righteousness,*
and

and to know his Power is the Root of Immortality, Wisd. 15. v. 3. This may suffice to shew thee the Reason of my Advice. Let me now as briefly direct thee how to practise it.

§ 2. To this Purpose let me tell thee,

1. That thou art not concerned to know as much as may be known of God, or as learned Men do know: But only so much as is necessary, or as may be helpful to keep thee entirely resigned and obedient to his Will; and therefore thou must not trouble thyself with those nice and curious Speculations in Religion, which are of no Use or Tendency to this End. That Knowledge, whatever the Object of it is, which will not conduce to make thee better, or prevent thy becoming worse than thou art, is impertinent, useless and unprofitable; the Hunting after it hath ruined Thousands, but never saved one Soul. Those that pursue after it, are thus described by St. Paul, 1 Tim. 6. v. 3, 4. *They consent not to wholesome Words, and to the Doctrine which is according to Godliness; they are proud, knowing nothing, but doting about Questions and Strifes of Words.*

2. Though thou art not concerned to know as much as may be known of God, yet thou must endeavour to know these great and useful Things I have spoken of, as well as possibly thou canst; and therefore, thou must not content thyself with that slight, superficial Knowledge, which the generality of Men have of them, who rather dream of Divine Things, than know them; but thou must labour for a clear, distinct Apprehension of them, and for a firm and well-grounded Persuasion, both of the Truth

Truth and Goodness of them. And to this Purpose, thou must,

3. Apply thy self to the Use of all good Means, and that with great Care and Diligence; remembering, That if it be Folly to do meaner Things slightly, (as certainly it is, because many Things many Times depend upon our least Actions) to be careless and slight in such a Matter as this, can be no less than Madness. Now the Means that you are to Use, are these that follow:

1. Reading the Holy Scriptures, and hearing them read; this thou art to do daily; thou must borrow some Part of every Day (to say nothing here of what thou art to do upon Holy-days) from thy Worldly Employments, to read or hear them read. Our Blessed Saviour bids us *search the Scriptures, because in them we think we have eternal Life*, John 5. v. 39. And St. Paul tells us, *That they are able to make us wise unto Salvation*, 2 Tim. 3. v. 15. And if any Man's Words are of greater Weight with us, than theirs, we do ill deserve the Name of Christians.

2. Reading good Books; I call those good, which treat of the great Things of God modestly, discreetly, plainly, convincingly, and affectionately: Of which sort I know not many in the World; and therefore thou art to take the best Advice thou canst have, in the choice of them.

3. Hearing of Sermons and good Discourses made by Christ's Ministers, whether in the Pulpit upon particular Texts of Scripture; or in the Desk, as Expositions of some larger Portions

tions of it, or of some of the chiefest Points of Religion, contained in the Catechism. These Discourses Christ's Ministers are commanded to make, for the Edification of Christ's Church, [See 2 Tim. 4. v. 1, 2.] and therefore Christian People must needs think themselves bound to attend unto them, and they are over-wise or over-good, that conceit they have no need of them; I mean, that they are neither wise nor good.

4. Frequent conferring with serious Christians about divine Things, which is a Means of improving Knowledge, that hath several Advantages above any other; for besides this, that we shall instruct others as well as our selves, imparting our own Knowledge to them, whilst we receive of theirs; that which we thus learn, we apprehend more clearly, and are more deeply affected with, than we are with that which we receive any other way; and therefore, it is much to be lamented, that it is no more used by those that call themselves Christians, than we see it is: And if we may not infer from the Neglect of it, that Men are not so knowing in the Things of God, as they take upon them to be; I am sure we may conclude from it, that they are not so good as they ought to be: They seldom forbear to talk of that which they love, when there is Occasion offered for it; so they would never be silent in these Things, if they had that hearty Affection for them, which they ought to have. And as for the common Excuse among the more serious Sort of People, that they would not be taken for Hypocrites, (as too many in this last Age, among whom this hath been

been in fashion, have discovered themselves to be :) It is so far from justifying their Neglect, that it manifests the Naughtiness of their Hearts, whilst they shew themselves more careful for their own Esteem among Men, than for the Honour of God, and the great Concerns of their Souls. There would be little or no Religion seen in the World, if the Abuse of it by Hypocrites would warrant Men to cast off the Profession of it : And to give any good Reason why so useful a Part of it, should for that Cause be laid aside, whilst they think themselves concerned to appear Religious in other Things, I believe will puzzle the most Subtle among them. There were too many Hypocrites in Holy David's Time, and yet *his Tongue did not cease to speak of God's Righteousness, and of his Praise all the Day long*, Psal. 35. v. 28. And the Apostles Times were not so happy, as to be without them, and yet they call upon Christians, *To exhort one another daily*, Heb. 3. v. 13. *And to teach and admonish each other, and that by Psalms and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs*, as well as other Ways, Colos. 3. v. 16. Those good Men did never think, that the Danger of being accounted Hypocrites would discharge them from *Seasoning their Discourses with Salt*, or from speaking such Things in their Conversation with each other, as might be profitable, *and minister Grace unto the Hearers*, Ephes. 4. v. 29. and Colos. 4. v. 6. and why we should think, that it becomes us to use that unprofitable, not to say that corrupt Communication which daily proceeds from our Mouths, without having any Respect

respect to the edifying of one another in that which is good, I cannot understand.

5. Meditating frequently upon the good Things we read and hear. This is another Means for the Improvement of our Knowledge in the Things of God; and it is so necessary, that without it all the rest will avail us but very little; for this is the Chewing, or rather the Digesting of what we read and hear: It is that which implants those Notices of Things which we have got into our Heads, in our Hearts, and makes them to bring forth those good Fruits which in their own Nature they are fit to do.

Mich. de Montaign. It was a good Observation of a great Man some Years ago, That in all human Sects, there were never any, what Difficulty or Strangeness soever their Doctrine contained, but would in some Sort conform their Behaviour, and square their Lives unto it; whereas this Divine and Heavenly Institution, which we pretend to prefer before all Doctrines that ever were in the World, seldom makes Christians but by the Tongue; of which this Reason may be given, as pertinent to our present Business, that those being in love with their Doctrines, how absurd soever they were, either because they were of their own Invention, or because they had their first Inventors in great Admiration, did so exercise their Thoughts upon them, that their Souls could not but receive such Impressions from them, as appeared in their outward Behaviour: Whereas most of those that are called Christians, having no such Kindness for this Heavenly Doctrine, or the Author of it, do never employ their Thoughts about it; or if they

they do, it is so seldom, and in so slight and careless a Manner, that it cannot work any good Effect upon them. Did they meditate daily upon it, as Holy *David* did upon God's Law, *Psal.* 119. v. 97. Did they examine its Truth; did they weigh its Goodness; did they apply it to themselves, and make Tryal of its Force and Power upon their Souls; they would be so fashioned to the Image and Likeness of it, as to be known by their Lives and Conversations from all other Men. Thou must be frequent then in the Use of this Means, and let no Day pass thee without spending some Time in it: And if thou art in such Circumstances at any Time, that thou must either omit to read good Books, or to meditate, I advise thee to omit that, rather than this: For he that reads but little, and meditates much, will be a wiser, and better Man, than he that reads much, and meditates none or very little.

6. Prayer. This is a Means which must accompany all the rest, and ought never to be omitted; for certain it is, that we can know no more of God, than we are taught by him. If he do not manifest himself unto us, if he do not enlighten our Minds, and assist our Endeavours, we shall advance but little by all we can do. The *Psalmist* tells us, that *it is God that teacheth Man Knowledge*, *Psal.* 94. v. 10. and *St. Paul* tells us, *That Wisdom and Knowledge are the Gifts of his Spirit*, *1 Cor.* 12. v. 8. and if we desire that Spirit, or those Gifts, we must ask for them; for thus did the Holy Men of old, as the Scripture assures us, *Psal.* 25. v. 4. *Psal.* 119. v. 66. And this the Apostle *St. Paul* taught us to do, when he prayed for the *Colossians*, *That they might*
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be filled with the Knowledge of God, in all Wisdom, and spiritual Understanding; That they might walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good Work, and increasing in the Knowledge of God, Colos. 1. v. 9, 10. And then in the last Place,

7. There is another Means of Improving our Knowledge, of as great Use, though little thought of, as any of the former, *viz.* The making a right Use of that which we know, by applying it to Practice, and regulating our Lives and Conversations according to it; by thus using what we know, we shall come to know it better, for there is no Knowledge comparable to that which we call Experimental; and he that *tasts* how good the Lord is, and how good the things of God are, which is the Word by which the *Psalmist* expresses this Knowledge, *Psal. 34. v. 8.* knows them as much better than others do, as they that *tast* the Sweetness of Honey, know it better than they that have only heard of it. Besides, by this Use of what we know, we are put into a better Disposition to know those things which as yet we know not; for, as some of the old Heathen wise Men are wont to say, *As no Eye can behold the Sun, if it hath not the Image of the Sun in it, so no Man is capable of understanding the things of God, but he whose Soul is in some measure fashioned to the Likeness of God;* and this is confirmed by a more skilful Man in divine Things; than the wisest of them, I mean St. Paul, who tells us, *That the Natural (or Animal) Man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned, 1 Cor. 2. v. 14.* which As-

sertion is grounded upon this Truth, That there must be some Conformity between the knowing Faculty, and the Thing to be known, or else there can be no Knowledge; and therefore, if we do not Improve that little Knowledge which we have by the Light of Nature, according to those small Remains of God's Image in us, to the mortifying of our naughty corrupt Affections; and if we use not those external Helps to that Light which God gives, to the spiritualizing of our Minds, we can never truly understand the Things of the Spirit; whereas, doing this, we shall be able to judge (or to discern them) clearly. And this is that which our great Master teaches us, *John 7. v. 17.* where he shews us, what we must do to attain a true and saving Knowledge of his Doctrine; *If any Man will do his Will, he shall know of my Doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of my self:* And in another place, to encourage us to the Practical Use of what we know, he tells us, *He that keepeth my Commandments, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest my self unto him,* *John 14. v. 21.* Thus have I shewed thee how thou must endeavour to Improve thy self in the Knowledge of God. I now proceed to give thee some further Advice.

C H A P. V.

Sect. 1. *Containing a Fifth Advice, To Live always as in God's Sight; with the great Usefulness of this, to promote a Holy Life.*

Sect. 2. *Containing some Directions for the Practice of this Duty of Living always as in God's Sight.*

§ 1. **T**HOU must Live always as in God's Sight, or (as the Words of the Psalmist are, Psal. 16. v. 8.) thou must set God always before thee. This is a Rule of so great Use in a Holy Life, that some spiritual Guides have thought, that it may serve instead of all other Rules. And truly, if we suppose Men to have that sound Knowledge of God, which I have but now advised thee too seek after, I know no Reason but it may; however, the Usefulness of it must be acknowledged to be great, and it lies so plain, that many Words need not be used to shew it thee; for if clear and sound Apprehensions of God's Majesty, of his sovereign Power, unsearchable Wisdom, Goodness, and Truth, will possess our Hearts with Love, and Fear, and bow our Wills to his Obedience, as I have shewed thee that they will: Surely, that which will keep those Apprehensions always present, and in Force upon our Minds, (as the Practice of this Rule will do) will keep us always resign'd and obedient to him. We know by Experience, that the Eyes of those whom we

honour, and in whose Favour we desire to be, have a great Influence upon us, and make us take heed to our selves, and to all our Behaviour; and therefore, the Masters of Virtue among the Heathens were wont to advise their Scholars to imagine some excellent Person, for whom they had a great Veneration, to be always present with them, as an Observer of their Actions. And can the Remembrance of God's All-seeing Eye be less powerful with us, to make us circumspect in our Ways, and careful to approve our selves in all Things to him? Can we have a greater Regard to the Eyes of mortal Men, whose Favour or good Opinion can never stand us but in little stead, than we have to the Eyes of the Everlasting God, in whose Favour is Life, and in whose Approbation consists our everlasting Happiness? No, it is impossible. *I have thought on thy Name, saith the Psalmist, and have kept thy Law.* And in another Place, *My Ways are always before thee, therefore have I kept thy Precepts and thy Testimonies,* Psalm 119. v. 168. It is not unknown that some of the worst of Men, are sometimes restrained from doing Evil, by the Thoughts of God's Presence; and the great Care that most of them take to avoid thinking upon God, is no inconsiderable Argument, that the bearing him always in their Minds, would prove an absolute Cure to their Wickedness: For wherefore do they put away the Thoughts of him as much as they can, but because they are sensible, that those Thoughts would constrain them to become new Men, and to relinquish those filthy Practices, which they cannot find in their Hearts to forsake? It is a
good

good Story, and may fitly have a Place here, which we have from one of the Fathers of the Church, if my Memory fails me not. 'Of a young Man who being tempted by a wanton Strumpet, seemed to consent to her unlawful Desires, but required some secret Place to content her: She therefore lead him into a private Room, and when he excepted against it, as not private enough, she led him into another; and that not pleasing him, she brought him into the most secret Place in the House, and told him, that it was not possible any Eye should see him there, or that any should come to interrupt them: But then the young Man putting on a more serious Countenance, demanded of her, Whether she thought that they could there be concealed from the Eyes of Almighty God? With which Question, and some short Discourse that was pertinent to it, he did not only cool her Lust for the Present, but converted her altogether from her filthy Course of Life.' Now, if the Consideration of God's Presence does sometimes work these good Effects upon some of the worst of Men, who neither know him truly, nor love him heartily, and who have been so far from both, that they have preferred the poorest Objects of their Lusts before him; how happy will the Effects of it be upon those, who have so known and loved him, as to renounce both themselves and the World for his Sake; who love him as much for his Goodness as they fear him for his Power; and who had rather dye than displease him, not so much because he can punish, as because they know him to be worthy of all the Love, Service, and

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Obedience,

Obedience, that they can possibly pay unto him? Surely, as those Men cannot but delight to think of him, and cannot but account themselves happy, that they are always under so good an Eye; so the Remembrance, and Consideration of it, must needs keep them constantly resigned to him, and in all Things obedient to his Will. Thus much for the Reason of my Advice: I proceed

§ 2. To direct thee in the Practice of it. It must be confest, that it will be a hard Matter for some to practice it: Those that are Slaves to their Flesh, and to the World, and are not at Liberty to think seriously of any Thing else, and whose Consciences are burthen'd with the Guilt of many Sins, will find it very difficult, if not impossible, though they be ever so well directed: Such Men must first practice the Duties of Self-denial, and Resignation: But to those that are rescued from under the Tyranny of those cruel Masters, and are entirely resigned to God, and united to him by Love, as I hope thou art, nothing can be more easy, pleasant, and delightful; our Souls willingly employing their Thoughts upon that which they love, and gladly embracing all Opportunities of being in its Presence; and therefore very brief Directions may suffice thee concerning it, and

1. Let me advertise thee, that the Practice of it must be grounded upon a firm Persuasion of God's Omnipresence, and Omniscience: He *fills Heaven and Earth*, as himself tells us, *Jerem. 23. v. 24.* He encompasses them without, and he fills them within; and as the Author to the *Hebrews* assures us, *all Things are naked and open to his Eyes*, Chap. 4. v. 13. they pierce

pierce to the very Marrow of our Bones, and to the Bottom of our Intrails; they accompany all the extravagant Wandrings of our Imaginations, and discover the hidden Images of our Memories; they look through the closest Foldings of our Hearts, and discern the most subtle Devices of our Spirits. Now the firm Belief of those Things being laid for a Foundation, thou must accustom thyself.

2. To behold God in every Thing; though he is no where to be seen by the Eye, yet thy Mind may perceive him in every Place, and in every Thing, in the Heavens above, and in the Earth beneath, and in every Part and Corner of them: In the Men thou conversest with, and in the Beasts thou rulest over; in the Fowls of the Air, and the Fishes of the Sea; in the Grass of the Field, and the Trees of the Forest; in thyself, and in every Thing round about thee; in all these he may be clearly discerned exerting that Power, Wisdom and Goodness, which first gave Being to them, in sustaining, preserving, and disposing of them. And does he thus lye open to thee in every Thing, and has he made thee capable of discerning him, and wilt thou take no Notice of him? Far be it from thee. But then,

3. Thou must not only behold God in every Thing, but thou must behold him in every Thing looking upon thee, observing what Regard thou hast to him, what Respect thou bearest him, and how thou demeanest thyself before him; as thy Heart must tell thee wheresoever thou art, and whatsoever thou lookest upon, that God is there; so it must tell thee likewise, that there God seeth thee

thee. God is with thee every where, and his Eyes are always upon thee; be thou also at all Times with God, by an actual Remembrance of him, and the Application of thy Mind unto him. The People of *Israel* committed great Wickedness, because they said in their Hearts, *God hath forsaken the Earth, and the Lord seeth not*, Ezek. 9. v. 9. Do thou bring thy Heart to tell thee the contrary in all thy ways, and that will restrain thee from every evil Thing. But then to make this Practice both more profitable, and more pleasant to thee, thou wilt do well in the last Place,

4. To accustom thyself to frame some Acts of Love upon every Apprehension of God's Presence, and in all Humility of Soul to offer them unto him. As God is worthy of the greatest Love of our Souls, so in every Thing we look upon, he appears to be so: And therefore it is very fit, that we should express our selves to be sensible of it, by some Acts of Love, as often as any Thing presents him to our Minds: Now these Acts may be made several ways; I will set thee down some of the chiefest of them, to the End that thou mayst more readily lay hold upon all Occasions that are offered thee for so good an Exercise. They may be made,

1. By way of Admiration and Transport. Thus; O God! how great is thy Majesty! how great is thy Goodness towards the Sons of Men! What manner of Love is that wherewith thou hast loved us! *O the Depth of the Riches, both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways*

Ways past finding out! said St. Paul, Rom. 11. v. 33.

2. By way of Esteem and Preference. Thus mayst thou say, as a devout Man was wont, *My God, and all things!* and as another, *None but Christ, None but Christ:* And as the Psalmist, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? And there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee,* Psal. 73. v. 25. And again, *There be many that say, Who will shew us any Good? But, Lord, lift thou up the Light of thy Countenance upon us,* Psal. 4. v. 6.

3. By way of Protestation and Resolution. Thus St. Peter thrice to his dear Lord and Master, *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee,* John 21. v. 15. Thus the Psalmist, *I will love thee, O Lord, my Strength,* Psal. 18. v. 1. And in another Psalm, *I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous Judgments,* Psal. 119. v. 106.

4. By way of Desire and Aspiration. Thus mayst thou say with a Holy Father, [St. Augustine.] *Let me find thee, O the Desire of my Heart! Let me possess thee, O Love of my Soul! Let me hold thee fast for ever in the very midst of my Heart, O blessed Life! O sovereign Sweetness of my Soul!* Or with the Psalmist, *As the Heart panteth after the Water-brooks, so panteth my Soul after thee, O God; my Soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?* Psal. 42. v. 1, 2. When will the Lord call home his banished? When shall I return to my Father's House?

5. By way of Oblation and Resignation. As thus; Lord, I am thine, I am thine by a thousand Titles; and I will be thine, and none but thine for ever; thine I am, thine is all I have, and therefore to thee do I resign myself and all.

6. By way of Humiliation and Annihilation. Thus good *Jacob*; *I am not worthy of the least of all thy Mercies*, Gen. 32. v. 10. And thus Holy *Job*; *Behold I am vile*, Chap. 40. v. 4. And thus likewise the Psalmist, *Lord, what is Man, that thou takest Knowledge of him; or the Son of Man, that thou makest account of him? Man is like to Vanity, his Days are as a Shadow that passeth away*, Psal. 144. v. 3, 4. What art thou, O Lord? And what am I? Surely thou art the Fulness of Being, but I am Nothing.

7. By way of Confidence and Reliance upon God. Thus; Can a Woman forget her sucking Child, that she should not have Compassion on the Son of her Womb? Yea, they may forget, but God will not forget his People. Though my Father and Mother forsaketh me, yet the Lord will take me up: Though I perish, yet will I trust in him. He cloaths the Lilies of the Field, and feeds the Fowls of the Air, and will he not feed and cloath me? He hath given me his only-begotten Son, and will he not with him give me all Things?

8. By way of Benediction and Praise. Thus; Great is the Lord, and worthy to be praised, yea, his Name is exalted above all Blessing and Praise. All thy Works shall praise thee, O Lord, and all thy Saints shall blefs thee. Whilst
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I live I will praise the Lord, I will sing Praises unto God whilst I have any Being.

These are some of the Ways wherein Holy Men have been wont to express and exercise their Love to God; and in some or other of these I would have thee to be continually exercising and expressing thine, according as Occasion is given thee, or as the Things that bring God to thy Mind do direct and lead thee. Thou wilt not be long accustomed to these Practices, but thou wilt be sensible of such Advantage by them, as no Words of Man can express: Thou wilt perceive thy Heart to be more closely united to God every Day than other, and wilt have such a Sense of his Love continually upon thy Soul, as will make all the Changes of thy Life comfortable, and fill thee oftentimes with Joys, that can be compared to none but those of the Saints in Heaven. The Truth is, we are never more like to those blessed Spirits, than when we are thus employ'd; for what do they but contemplate the Beauty of his Majesty, and make Acts of Love to him? But here's the Difference, they see him clearly as he is, they behold his unveiled Face, and consequently exercise their Love with the greatest Fervors, and partake of the highest Joys; whereas we, beholding him only in the Glass of his Creatures, are much more cold in our Love, and therefore less happy in our Joys.

I can foresee but one Thing that thou canst object against these Exercises, *viz.* That they will be a Hindrance to thy worldly Business. But this, one Word may serve to remove; for these being Works of the Soul, which is an active and most

most nimble Substance, and not requiring the help of any Member of the Body, may be intermix'd with all thy ordinary Employments; and if there be any of such a Nature, as will not admit them without some little Stop, as requiring a full Application of thy Mind; yet that Stop will be no Hindrance, but rather a mighty Furtherance to them; for whilst thou dost thus look up to God, upon whom the Success of every Thing depends, thou wilt be able to proceed more cheerfully in thy Employments, and with greater Vigour, through the Confidence of his Blessing upon all that thou art a doing.

But there is one Advice more, which shall conclude this Part, and may supply all that is wanting in it, *viz.*

C H A P. VI.

Containing the last general Advice, To commit our Souls to the Care and Conduct of Spiritual Guides; with proper Directions relating to it.

§ 1. **T**HAT thou must commit thy Soul to the Care and Conduct of a spiritual Guide. For the enforcing of this Advice much might be said, and indeed the little Account that most Men make of their Spiritual Guides, in this Age, requires much to be said: But because I have set myself but short Bounds; and because, I hope,

I hope, that thou art well disposed by the foregoing Discourses, to receive good Counsel, I shall be as brief as possibly I can with respect to thy Good. There are three or four Things which are well known to Christians, and I hope they will be readily acknowledged by thee for great Truths ; which being well consider'd by thee, will let thee know both how necessary, and how beneficial this Advice will be to thee.

1. Thou wilt acknowledge, that Christ hath settled an Order of Men as his Substitutes upon Earth, to take Care of Souls to the End of the World. This we find him doing immediately before his Ascension into Heaven. Thus we read in *St. Matthew's Gospel, Chap. 28. v. 18, 19, 20* *All Power is given unto me in Heaven, and in Earth ; go therefore and teach (or disciple) all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all Things whatsoever I have commanded you ; and lo, I am with you always even to the End of the World.* And thus we read in the 16th Chapter of *St. Mark, v. 15, 16.* *Go ye into all the World, and preach the Gospel to every Creature : He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved ; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.* And thus in the 20th Chapter of *St. John's Gospel, v. 21, 22, 23.* *As my Father hath sent me, so send I you : And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost ; whosoever's Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whosoever's Sins ye retain, they are retained.* That our blessed Saviour said all this to his Disciples,

Disciples, no Christian can doubt; and that by these Words he did commit that Power and Authority to them, which he had received from his Father, for the Good of Mens Souls, is not to be denied; and if any Question be made, whether this concerned the Apostles only, and was confined by him to their own Persons: It may clearly be resolved by considering, 1. The Importance of those Words, *I am with you always, even to the End of the World*: For how could he be with them to the End of the World, if we suppose those Words to concern their Persons only? They might be with him indeed, but he could not be with them to the End of the World, who were not to be, or to exercise the Authority given them to the End thereof. 2. By considering the Necessities of the World: For what an unhappy Condition would they be in, who were to live in succeeding Ages, if no Provision were made for their Instruction in the Christian Faith, &c.^s 3. By considering that the Apostles, after they had received the Holy Ghost in an eminent and remarkable Manner, according to Christ's Promise, did understand the Commission otherwise; and therefore we find, that they did by Prayer and Imposition of Hands (the ordinary Way of conferring Offices among the *Jews*) confer the like Power upon others, as they saw good for the Edification of the Church: And those Persons, upon whom they conferred this Power, are charged by them *to take heed to the Flock, and to feed the Church of Christ; and are said to be called and appointed thereunto by the Holy Ghost*, Act. 20. v. 28. And further, those

Persons

Persons that were thus ordained by the Apostles, are charged by them to ordain others in the same Way; and Directions are given them, what Manner of Persons they were to ordain to so great an Office. Thus the Apostle St. Paul having put *Timothy* in mind of *that sacred Office to which he had been ordained by Imposition of Hands*, 2 Epist. Chap. 1. v. 6. And of *that Form of sound Words, which he had heard from him in Faith and Love*, v. 13. charges him to *commit the same to faithful Men, who might be able to teach others also*, Chap. 2. v. 2. And the same Apostle tells *Titus*, to whose Care he had committed the whole Church of the Island of Crete, *that he had left him there*, and appointed him to ordain *Elders, i. e. Bishops and Presbyters in every City*, Chap. 1. v. 5. To these St. Paul gives Directions, *How they should behave themselves in the Church of God*, as his Expressions are, 1 Tim. 3. v. 15. Not only as to the Ordaining of others, but likewise in many other Things relating to the Edification of the Church, viz. 1. As to Preaching, *That they should hold fast that Form of Doctrine which they had received, and teach that, and none other*, 1 Tim. 6. v. 14. and 2 Tim. 3. v. 14. 2. As to the Publick Worship and Service of God, 1 Tim. 2. v. 1, 2, 3. 3. As to Government and Discipline, the holding of Ecclesiastical Courts, the receiving of Accusations, the convening of the Accused publickly, the correcting of Heretical, and other Disorderly Persons, the stopping of their Mouths, and the excommunicating them, or casting them out of the Church, *charging them to prejudge no Man's Cause*,

Cause, and to do nothing for Favour or Partiality, 1 Tim. 5. v. 19, 20, 21. and Tit. 1. v. 11. and Chap. 3. v. 10. And so likewise as to the reconciling of Penitents, and restoring them into the Communion of the Church, and the Hopes of Pardon, 1 Tim. 5. v. 22. By all which it appears plainly, that Christ did not commit the Care of those Souls, which He had redeemed with his most precious Blood, to those only, who were in a particular Manner called his Apostles, in the Words before set down; but that he did there settle an Order of Men, and give Authority to that Order in a perpetual Succession, to watch over them, and to see that none of them perish, or fall short of that Happiness which he designed for them. But,

2. Thou must acknowledge likewise that this Order of Men, thus settled by Christ to take Care of Souls, are authorized and empowered by him to preach the Gospel, to make known the Love of God, as manifested in Christ to the World; to receive those that do believe the Gospel, into the Covenant of Grace and Society of Christians, by Baptism; to instruct those, whom they have baptized, in the Will of God, both publicly and privately; to encourage them in their Obedience to it; to excite and quicken them when they are dull and slothful; to reprove and admonish them when they do amiss; to restore them when they are fallen; to comfort them in their Sorrows; to pardon their Sins; to feed them with the Body and Blood of Christ; to pray for them, and bless them in Christ's Name; to help them all the Ways they can in the whole Course of their Lives, and to assist them in their
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last Agonies, that so they may finish their Course with Joy. This thou wilt plainly see, if thou wilt consider, besides the Places of Scripture already mentioned, the following Texts, *Acts.* 20. v. 20, 21, 26, 27, 31. *2 Tim.* 4. v. 1, 2. *Gal.* 6. v. 1. *Luke* 22. v. 19, 20. *1 Cor.* 11. v. 23, 24. *Jam.* 5. v. 14, 15.

3. Thou must acknowledge, that Christ hath promised *to be with those his Officers and Ministers*, and accordingly he hath, is, and will be with them in the Exercise of the several Parts of their Office *to the End of the World; i. e.* He will assist them with special Illumination, Direction, and Power, sufficient for the Dispensation of the Gospel, and the Edification of the Church; and according to the Necessities and Capacities of the Times wherein they are to live: He will furnish them with all necessary and requisite Gifts, will accompany their Endeavours with his Holy Spirit, to make them effectual; will hear their Prayers, confirm their Censures, protect their Persons, &c. This we are plainly taught in several Places of Scripture, besides those already pointed to. See *John* 14. v. 16, and 26. Where Christ promises his Apostles *a Comforter to be with them for ever, and to teach them all Things.* And see *Ephes.* 4. Where the Apostle speaking of the several Officers that Christ hath appointed in his Church, and of the Gifts and Graces which he doth furnish them withal, does intimate that these shall be continued in the Church, in such a Manner and Measure as is necessary, *till we all come* (that is, both *Jews and Gentiles*) *into the Unity of the Faith, and unto a perfect Man, unto the Measure of the Stature*

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Stature of the Fulness of Christ, i. e. to such Perfection in Knowledge, Wisdom and Goodness, as that there will be no further Danger of being like Children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine, v. 13, 14. And further, thou may'st observe, That, as they are called the Ambassadors of Christ, and are said to beseech Men in Christ's stead, 2 Cor. 5. v. 20. So Christ is said to speak in them and by them, 2 Cor. 13. v. 3. Ephes. 2. v. 17. And to work mightily and effectually in them, Gal. 2. v. 8. And further they are said to be Workers together with Christ, 2 Cor. 6. v. 1. And to be Labourers together with God, 1 Cor. 3. v. 9. God giving the Encrease, whilst Paul planted, and Apollos watered, v. 6, 7, of the same Chapter, and God opening Mens Hearts, Acts 16. v. 14. Which are said to be pricked by the Apostles Preaching, Acts 2. v. 37. Lastly, see Revel. 1. v. 13. 16. Where to denote Christ's perpetual Presence, Assistance, and Protection to these his Ministers or Officers, the appointed Guides and Governors of the Church, after all the Times of the Apostles, John only excepted; Christ is represented, though in Glory, yet walking in the midst of the seven Churches of Asia, and holding the seven Stars, i. e. the Angels or Bishops of those Churches [v. 20.] in his right Hand.

4. Thou must acknowledge likewise, That, as Christ hath appointed an Order of Men thus to guide and govern his Church, and hath charged them to attend unto it with all their Might, upon pain of answering for those Souls that shall perish through their Neglect or Default,

fault, [See *Ezek.* 34. v. 8, 9, 10. and *Acts* 20. v. 26, 27.] so he hath charged all Men to respect them as his Officers, as the Guides and Governors of their Souls on Earth under him, and to submit themselves to their Conduct and Government, in all Things relating to the Salvation of their Souls; and this upon Pain of losing all the Privileges, Advantages, and Benefits, which they can hope for, or pretend to upon the Account of what he hath done, and suffered for us. Of this thou wilt see no Reason to doubt, if thou wilt consider, that this gracious Provision which Christ hath made for Mens Souls in appointing these Guides and Governors, and vouchsafing them all necessary Assurances for their Discharge of their Office, will signify very little, in case Men be at Liberty to submit to them or not, and may be saved, though refusing to submit to them. But besides this, (to give thee all the Satisfaction that may be, in a Matter which many are very unwilling to understand) thou mayst consider some few Places of Scripture, which do plainly inform us of the Mind of Christ concerning it. I omit what may be said out of the Old Testament, and from the Priestly Power and Office under it, (as I have done all along) because I design not a full Discourse upon those Things. As God the Father was pleased to declare, that he had constituted his Son Christ Jesus to be the Supreme Guide and Governor of Souls, and to charge all Men to hear and obey him, of which we have clear Testimony, *Matt.* 3. v. 17. and *Matt.* 17. v. 5. So Christ hath left to the World a clear Testimony, that he did commit the Authority

rity which he had received from his Father, to his Apostles and their Successors, John 20. v. 21. *As my Father sent me, so send I you;* and that it is his Will, that all must hear and obey them, who will have any Interest in him, or Benefit by him; so in the Places before mentioned, *Matt.* 28. v. 19, 20. and *Mark* 16. v. 16. Where, giving Commission to his Apostles to preach the Gospel to all Nations, and to receive those that should believe, into that Covenant of Grace, which he had sealed with his Blood, by Baptism, he tells them: *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned, i. e.* those that do heartily believe that Gospel which you preach, and do profess so to do, and do engage themselves to be my Disciples, and to obey my Commands by receiving Baptism at your Hands; and do continue to learn from you what I have commanded, [Compare these Words with those in *St. Matthew.*] and practice accordingly in the whole Course of their Lives, shall be saved; but those that refuse to do this, shall be damned; to which Words if we joyn those, which he spake some time before to his Disciples, when he sent them to preach the Gospel to the lost Sheep of *Israel*, *Luke* 10. v. 16. we shall understand his Mind more clearly; *He that heareth you, saith he, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.* Where we see, that as he hath given that Authority, which he had received from his Father, to these his Ministers, so he doth require all Men to own it, and submit unto it; and that he will account the Disowning, the Not-obeying,

obeying, the Rejecting and Despising them in the Exercise of it, as the Disowning, Rejecting, and Despising of himself and his Authority; and his Father likewise will judge it to be a Rejecting and Despising him, and his Sovereign Power and Authority. But this is not all that the Holy Scriptures speak concerning this Matter; it was foreseen by God, how hardly the generality of Men would be convinced of these things, and therefore the Holy Spirit stirred up the blessed Apostles, frequently to put Men in mind of the Authority of Christ's Ministers, and the Duty that we owe unto them. Thus we find St. Paul telling the *Corinthians*, *That they are the Ambassadors of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God, and charging them to esteem them as such,* 1 Cor. 4. v. 1. and we find him beseeching the *Thessalonians* to know them that did labour among them, and were over them in the Lord, and did admonish them; and to esteem them very highly in Love for their Work sake, 1 Thes. 5. v. 12, 13. And the Author to the *Hebrews* charges them, *To obey them that had the Rule over them*, [or their Guides, or Leaders, so the Word signifies] *and to submit themselves*; and he backs his Charge with this Reason, *That they did watch for their Souls, as those that were to give Account, i. e.* they are appointed by Christ to watch for Mens Souls, and they must give an Account to him of the Souls committed to their Charge: And this they can never be able to do with any Comfort, if they will not obey and submit themselves to them: And this, (he tells them) viz. Their making their Account sad and grievous by their Non-submission, *would be unprofitable*

table for them. He means more than his Words express, according to a Way of Speaking very usual in the Scriptures, *i. e.* this will be so far from being profitable for them, that it will bring the greatest Damage and Mischief to them, *viz.* the Ruin and Perdition of their Souls. I forbear to mention any more Places of Scripture, and I omit to urge the Practice of the first and best Christians, as also the black Characters that are given by some of the Holy Writers, of those that did slight the Guides and Governours of the Church, and refuse to submit themselves unto them; because I have promised not to be tedious.

Now having carefully observed, and seriously weighed these Things, give me leave to put some few Questions briefly to thee. Dost thou believe that there is no Need of these Spiritual Guides in the World? If there be no Need of them, why did Christ appoint them? Why did he not leave Men to themselves in the Concerns of their Souls, as he hath done in those Things that concern their Bodies, and their outward Estates? For, that he hath not appointed any Order of Men, to teach Men how to provide for their Bodies, or to encrease their Estates, is confest by all. Was there need of these Guides for the first preaching of Christianity to the World, and is there no need of them for the Propagation and Maintenance of it in the World? I forbear to press thee with the natural Blindness of Mens Understandings, with that Inconsideration, Rashness, Levity, Inconstancy, which is inseparable to human Nature; as also with that Averseness to the Things of God, and the great Interests of our Souls, which all Men feel, and
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good Men cannot but complain of : We may be confident, that if Christ had not known, that the World needed spiritual Guides, He would never have appointed any such, nor have promised them those Assistances, which thou hast now heard of, nor have taken any Care to inform Men of the Duty they do owe unto them ; and therefore are not those Men too much puffed up in their fleshly Minds, or too regardless of their everlasting Interests, that account these Guides to be of no Use to them ; or are wanting in that Respect for them, and Dependance upon them which they ought to have ? I doubt not, but thou wilt confess it. But further, dost thou not understand by what hath been said, that Men may receive very great Advantages by their spiritual Guides, if they please themselves ? Surely those of old, that received them as the *Galatians* did, *Ghap. 4. v. 14.* as the *Angels* of God, yea even as *Christ Jesus*, did believe so. Besides, was not the making of this Provision for the Good of Mens Souls, a great Demonstration of Christ's Love and Care for them ? And therefore must not they be great Despisers of the Love of Christ, and Enemies to their own Souls, that make little Account of it, and seek no Advantage by it ? Or can they with the least Shadow of Reason call themselves Christians, or expect to be Partakers of those Benefits which he hath promised to his faithful Servants, who have no regard at all to his Ordinances and Institutions, or no other regard to them, than as they please their own Humours, and are agreeable to their stubborn Wills ? I doubt not but thou wilt answer to these Demands according to my Heart's Desire ; and therefore thou canst not but

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acknowledge, that my Advice is good and useful: That thou commit thy Soul to the Care and Conduct of a Spiritual Guide. I proceed now to shew thee briefly, how thou must practice this Advice.

The Practice of the former Advice.

1. Thou must make choice of a good Guide. I call him a good Guide, who having Authority from Christ, is able to direct thee aright in all the Concerns of thy Soul; and will be faithful to thee. Christ hath no where promised, that none shall take upon them to be Guides of Souls but those that have Authority from him: Nor that all those that have Authority from him shall discharge their Office faithfully. Among his twelve Apostles there was a *Judas*, and among the seven Deacons ordained by the Apostles, Tradition tells us, there was one that failed: And in those Writings that we have of some of the Apostles, we find Complaints of some, that loved the World more than Christ, and their own fleshly Lusts more than the Good of Souls; and St. Peter hath told us, that, *as there were of old false Prophets among God's People, so there shall be false Teachers among Christians, who through Covetousness shall with feigned Words make Merchandise of them,* 2 Pet. 2. v. 1, 2, 3. And therefore it is no matter of Wonder, if there be some such among us now; but it ought to be matter of Caution to thee, with whom thou dost trust thy Soul. Thy Soul is a Jewel of too great Value to be put into the Hands of every Pretender, yea, or
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of every one whose Office it is to take Care of Souls. And those that are ready to follow the Conduct and Counsel of every one that will take upon him to be their Guide or Instructor, are not much less to be blamed, than those that will commit their Souls to none; and therefore thou art to take the greatest Care, and to use the best Skill thou hast, in the Choice of thy Guide; and because it is a Matter of no little Difficulty to make a right Choice, it will not, I hope, be thought impertinent to give thee some Assistance. And

I. I advise thee to betake thyself to thy Closet, and to beg of God to direct thee in thy Choice. Though thou hast ever so much Skill in judging of Men, yet it is possible that in this Case thou mayst be deceived; and the more thou trustest to thy own Skill, the greater Danger thou art in of being deceived, God usually suffering those that have a great Opinion of themselves, to miscarry in their best Undertakings: And therefore in this, as well as in other Things, thy Security lies in an humble Confidence in God's Direction, which thou art to beg of him by fervent Prayer; and though the Blessing be great, yet thou hast no Reason to doubt but thou shalt obtain it, if thou dost ask aright; for since he hath done so much for thy Soul already, he will not deny thee any Thing, thou mayst be confident, that he knows to be necessary for its Welfare and Happiness. *If any of you lack Wisdom (saith St. James) let him ask of God, who giveth to all Men liberally, and upbraideth not: and it shall be given him, Chap. i. v. 5.* And what greater Wisdom canst thou desire,

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than that which may enable thee to chuse a good Guide; except it be that which may enable thee to follow him, when thou hast made Choice of him? Which thou art also to ask of God. But then,

2. Though thou must not confide in thy own Skill, but in the Assistance and Direction of Almighty God; yet, since his Assistance and Direction can be expected only in a rational Way, it will behove thee to make use of that Skill which God giveth thee; and that, with as much Care, as if thy Success depended altogether upon it. This, in other Matters, thou thinkest thyself bound to do; and I can see no Reason why thou shouldest not be of the same Mind in this Case. Thou must therefore look out into the World, and consider, who among those Guides of Souls that are known to thee, is most fit to be trusted; and if thou dost desire the Opinion of some serious and discreet Friends, as thou art wont to do when thou needest a Physician for thy Body, or a Lawyer for settling thy Estate; I think thou wilt do very well: Only let me caution thee, that thou do not presume to make a Judgment of any one, with whom thou art not thoroughly acquainted; for otherwise, though it is possible thou mayst hit right, yet it is two to one that thou wilt be deceived; which will be a Fault that will admit of no Excuse. And the same Caution thou art to take in receiving the Judgments of others, which thou wilt not think to be needless, if thou dost consider, that as some few have better Repute in the World than they do deserve, so others have a worse; and it is commonly observed,
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that many excellent Men have suffered very much from many, meerly because they have given Credit to the Reports of those who were never intimately acquainted with them, and yet have presumed to pass their Censures on them. But to help thee as much as I can in this Matter, which is really of very great Importance to thee, it will not be amiss to give thee a short Account of the Qualifications and Properties of a good Guide, referring thee for further Instruction, to the Epistles of *St. Paul to Timothy and Titus.* And,

1. A good Guide is one that hath received Authority from Christ, to take Care of Souls; not immediately from Christ, but mediately, *i. e.* by Imposition of Hands from some Bishop of the Church, who in a constant Succession from the Apostles of our Lord, had Authority to give it. As for those that pretend to derive Authority immediately from Christ, thou must look upon them as Impostors, 'till they can shew those Testimonials of their Authority, which the Apostles did, *viz.* the Gifts of Tongues and Miracles; and if their Learning and seeming Piety should chance to incline thee to believe otherwise of them, it behoves thee to call to mind that Caution which Christ hath given thee, *Marth. 7. v. 15. Beware of false Prophets, which come to you in Sheeps-Cloathing, but inwardly they are ravening Wolves.* And as for those that pretend to Authority derived by the Hands of some of the inferiour Ministers in the Church, which are now, and have been for many hundred Years called Presbyters, and by that Name distinguished from Bishops; thou mayst upon the

same Grounds on which thou hast received thy Christianity, believe them to pretend to that which they have not; for it is certain, by unquestionable Records, that for above fifteen hundred Years, there was no such Authority allowed, or acknowledged in Presbyters, by the Church of Christ: And as for those in this last Age that did first pretend to this Authority, and did take upon them to confer it upon others by Imposition of their Hands; it is certain, that all the Authority they had, or could confer, they received from Bishops, which was only an Authority to preach the Word, and administer the Sacraments, according to the Rules of the Gospel, and the Canons of the Church; and this in Subordination to their Bishops; and not an Authority to ordain others in Opposition to their Bishops; and therefore if it be true, that none can give that which they have not to give, and that none can be presumed to have received that which was never given them, as certainly it is; thou hast great Reason to believe that those Persons, whom I now speak of, have no Authority from Christ to take Care of Souls. And then, in the last Place, for those that call themselves the Ministers of Christ, and pretend to have been so by the declared Consent of a small Number of People combined together under the Name of a Church; thou mayst believe them to be what they call themselves, when they can prove, that the Apostles of our Lord were the People's Ministers, and not Christ's; I mean, that they did receive their Authority from the People, and not from Christ. Now if these Men have no Authority
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from Christ, they have no Promise of Christ's Presence, Assistance and Blessing in those Exercises they take upon them to perform in his Name; and if they have no Promise of Christ's Presence or Blessing, thou hast no Reason to give up thyself to their Conduct. Thou mayst perhaps hear them speak many good Things of themselves and their Followers, and make great Boast of the Spirit of Christ; but when thou hast impartially considered the Heresies, Schisms, Seditions, Tumults, Rebellions, Murders, Rapines, Perjuries, which they have been the Authors and Promoters of, thou wilt know how to judge of their great Boasts, and godly Pretensions. By these their Fruits thou mayst know them. I say no more, nor indeed should I have said so much, but that the Disorders of the Age do make it necessary to give thee some little Caution,

2. A good Guide is a Man of Knowledge. He is able to teach thee as much as thou art bound to believe and practice: His Lips preserve Knowledge, and his Tongue can shew thee right Things. He cannot be a good Guide to others, that has need of a Guide himself. *If the Blind lead the Blind, both will fall into the Ditch*, Matth. 15. v. 14.

3. He is a Man of Prudence and Discretion, which appears both by his Conversation, and in the Exercise of his Ministry, fitting his Instructions to the Necessities and Capacities of his People; *He pours not new Wine into old Bottles*; He feeds not Children with strong Meat, and strong Men with Milk; He provides for every one what is fitting for him, and that in

due Season. Indiscretion does oftentimes as much Mischief as the grossest Ignorance.

4. He is Humble, Meek, and Peaceable. So was the great Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls: He was no lordly domineering Person; no Breaker of the Peace of the World, or Overturner of Governments: But was a Servant unto all, even to the meanest of the People: He pleased not himself, but others for their Good, and submitted himself patiently and quietly to the Authority of the Chief Priests, and of the *Roman* Emperor.

5. He is very Grave and Serious; not out of Sourness or Sullenness of Humour, but from a real Sense of the Sacredness of his Office, the Worth of Souls, and the Account he must give of them. It is said of a devout Man, that when some desired him to give them a certain Mark, by which they might know a Man to be truly Spiritual, he answered them in this Manner: 'If ye see any one that takes Delight in the
' common Sportings and Jestings, the Railleries
' and Drolleries of the World, that cannot patiently suffer Contempt and Reproach, take
' Heed that you believe not that Man to be
' Spiritual, though you should see him work
' Miracles.' This good Man was undoubtedly in the Right, and I think he had not been mistaken if he had omitted the latter Part concerning the not suffering Contempt, and given the Affectation of Wit and Drollery for a sufficient Mark of a very imperfect Christian; however, it may serve for a Mark to discover a bad Guide: For if every Christian should be a serious Person, (because Christ was so) the Ambassadors

bassadors of Christ should be much more so; their Deportment should be such as may awe the Men they do converse with, and in a silent Way deter them from their Sins; and their Persons should speak what the Statue of *Senacherib* is said to have done, *He who looketh to me, let him be Religious.* But though a good Guide be thus grave and serious, yet he is not Crabbed, Morose, or Cynical; but,

6. Affable and Courteous, and of sweet and winning Conversation; he disdains not to converse with the meanest People, and that freely and cheerfully too; nor to conform himself to all the innocent Customs of the World, so far as consists with the Sacredness of his Office, and the *Decorum* of his Person; having a due Respect to those, he becomes all Things to all Men; and though his Gravity shews him to be an Enemy to their Sins, yet his innocent and cheerful Compliances shew him to be a Lover of their Persons. There was never any Person more remarkable for this, than our blessed Saviour; who though his Gravity was such, that he was never seen to laugh, as we know of; yet was he of so sweet and benign a Temper, and so courteous and compliant in all his Carriage and Conversation, that none were ever offended at it; and to his Example does every good Guide of Souls conform himself in this as well as in other Things.

7. He is a Man of Courage, he fears not the Faces of the greatest Persons upon Earth, nor is discouraged in the doing of his Duty, by the Thoughts of their Displeasure. He is another *John the Baptist* in this Respect, who

was not afraid to tell the Tyrant *Herod*, That it was not lawful for him to have his Brother's Wife, Mark 6. v. 18. And like St. Paul, he can be contented, if God will have it so, not only to be bound, but to dye for the Name of the Lord Jesus, Acts 21. v. 13.

8. He is wholly devoted to the Work that Christ hath appointed him to do ; it is his only Business, and sole Care ; and as Christ said of himself, that it was his Meat and Drink to do the Will of his Father, so 'tis his, to do the Will of Christ, in taking Care for Souls. He is no Plodder for the World, no Seeker of the Fleece, no Hunter after Preferment ; these Worldly Things are as Dross and Dung to him, and he will not sell poor Souls for such Gains.

9. He is a great Lover of Souls, and of much Tenderneſs and Compassion towards them ; he will do any thing, yea, suffer any thing for their Good, and lay down his Life (if need be) for their Sakes ; he is grieved for their Miscarriages more than for all worldly Things, as *Christ was grieved for the Hardneſs of Mens Hearts*, and is better pleased with their Well-doing, than by the greatest earthly Prosperity ; they are his Joy and Crown that do well by his Ministry : He thinks no Honour greater, and knows no greater Joy.

Lastly, He is a Man of a Holy Life ; his Example teaches us as much as his Tongue ; and he is a Pattern for his People to walk by. *His Conversation is in Heaven*, and he can boldly call upon Men to be Followers of him, and to walk as they have him for an Example. Though he is not without his Failings and Imperfections,

as

as he is Flesh and Blood, yet no Crimes, or gross Sins, nor any indulging, or allowing of himself in the least, can the sharpest and most malicious Eye behold in him. Thus have I given thee a short Account of the Qualifications of a good Guide. Such a Guide thou mayst boldly commit thy Soul to, and if thou wilt follow his Directions, he will keep thee, through the Grace of God, from all Things hurtful, and lead thee into all Things profitable for thy Salvation.

But there is one Thing, that I am concerned in this Place to mind thee of, *viz.* That if the Curate of the Parish wherein thou livest, be thus qualified, thou hast a Guide provided for thee, and thou must seek no further; for he hath the Charge of thy Soul committed to him by God, and he must give an Account of it to God; which because he cannot do if another have the Conduct of thy Soul, thou must not upon any Pretence refuse his Conduct, and submit to another's; besides, in this Case, thou canst not reasonably expect the Blessing of God, under the Conduct of another; because, to please thyself thou dost act clean contrary to the Ordinance of God, and preferrest thy own Wisdom before the Wisdom of his Providence; besides, thou canst not hope to fall under the Conduct of a good Guide, if thou dost reject him, who by the Appointment of God ought to have the Conduct of thee, because no honest and prudent Guide will allow of this Practice, or take the Care of any upon him that belong to another Parish; Except it be when the Parish is so unhappy, as to be under the Conduct of one, that

is either grossly ignorant, or notoriously vicious. What I have said therefore of looking out for a Guide; thou must understand as meant only, when the Parish to which thou dost belong, is in this unhappy Condition. In this Case, (tho' thou art bound to attend to the publick Exercise of his Ministry, except thou art Licensed by him or the Governors of the Church to do otherwise, and receivest much Benefit by it) thou art to follow the Directions before given; but in no other. But to proceed,

2. In the second Place, Being resolved as to the Person thou designest for thy Guide, I advise thee to go to him; and having informed him of thy Desire to save thy Soul, and to put thyself under his Conduct in order to it; beseech him to receive thee into his Care, and to give thee such Directions as he shall think necessary and fitting for thee; assuring him, that thou wilt follow them to the utmost of thy Power, and endeavour to shew thy self a good Christian in submitting thyself to him, as to Christ's Minister, and by depending altogether upon him. And that he may the better Judge of the Honesty and Sincerity of thy Heart in what thou tellest him, and know what Directions thou hast most need of; be not ashamed to make thyself fully known to him; tell him what Manner of Education thou hast had, what Manner of Life thou hast lead, what Convictions thou hast had at any Time of the Evil of Sin, what Resolutions thou hast taken upon those Convictions, how far thou hast made them good, and wherein thou hast failed: Acquaint him with thy natural Temper, and thy acquired Inclinations: Tell him,

him, what evil Habits thou hast contracted, what vicious Customs thou hast been, or art engaged in; what Temptation thou hast found thyself most obnoxious to, and overcome by, &c. In a Word, I advise thee to open thy very Soul unto him [he will help thee to do it by seasonable and fitting Questions, if he find thee willing] and conceal not the least Thing from him. Thou wouldst not scruple to discover the State of thy Body to thy Physician, when thou needest his help; Why then shouldst thou be shy of acquainting thy Spiritual Physician with the State of thy Soul? Art thou more ashamed of the Diseases of thy Soul, than thou art of the Infirmary of thy Body? The greater Reason thou hast to desire their Cure, and in order to it, to make them known. Will thy Physician keep the Infirmities of thy Body secret? No less safe will the Secrets of thy Soul be in the Bosom of thy Spiritual Guide. Away then with that imprudent and unseasonable Modesty, which will not do thee the least Good, but may be the Occasion of thy Ruin. Hear what a Heathen Man hath said, and blush at the Folly of those that call themselves Christians. ‘Thou
Plutarch. ‘sayest unto a vicious Man, hide thyself with thy Vices, endure thy pestilent and dangerous Disease, conceal thy Envy and Superstition as certain Paintings, and beware, that thou give not thyself to such as can instruct and heal thee. [This is the Advice of the Devil, and his Instruments upon Earth] but the Ancients exposed their Sick Men to open View, that such as passed by, and had been Sick of the same Diseases, or had given
‘Ease

' Ease and Help thereunto, might signify so
 ' much unto the Sick Man: And they affirmed
 ' the Art itself, improved by such Experience,
 ' to have been much bettered thereby and en-
 ' creased; in like Manner it may seem expe-
 ' dient to lay open the Sins of our Life, and
 ' the Evil Affections of the Mind, that it may
 ' be lawful for any Man, considering and be-
 ' holding the same, to say, Art thou angry? Take
 ' heed of this; Art thou vexed with Jealousy?
 ' Do this; Art thou in Love? I myself was so,
 ' but have repented: Now when some Men
 ' hide their Vices, deny, and conceal them;
 ' what do they but fasten them more thoroughly
 ' and surely to themselves?' Thus a Heathen,
 whose Words I do make the greater Account
 of, because of those of St. *James*, Chap. 5. v. 16.
Confess your Faults one to another, and pray
one for another: Which, if we understand, as
 many are willing to do, of making known our
 Sins to our Christian Brethren, that they may
 the better understand what Petitions to put up
 to God in our behalf, they agree exactly with
 the Heathen's Advice, though it be grounded up-
 on another Motive; but the Truth is, the Words
 are read in some Books thus; *Confess your Faults*
therefore to one another. And so they plainly
 refer to the Words before, concerning the Elders
 of the Church, and their Prayers for the Sick,
 and the Effect of those Prayers, *viz* The Recovery
 of the Sick, and the Pardon of their Sins: And
 they import not our making Confession to our
 Christian Brethren; but as Men (to use one of
Basil. the Father's Words) do not lay open the
 Diseases of their Bodies to all, but to
those

those that are skilful in the Art of Healing, to the Presbyters of the Church, whose Office it is to Minister to the Health of Souls both by their Prayers and Counsels; and though the Words [*one to another*] seem to make against this Interpretation, and to imply a mutual Confession to be made by Christians to each other; yet, if the Use of the Phrase in other Places be considered, and particularly in that of St. Peter, 1 Epist. Chap. 5. v. 5. *All of you be subject to one another*; which must be understood according to the Reason of the Matter there spoken of, not of a mutual Subjection, but of a Subjection of all to those that are over them; they will be but of little weight against it; the whole Context and Matter spoken of here, directing us to this Interpretation, as well as in that of St. Peter. But to let this pass, it is enough for my present Purpose, that it be granted to be expedient for Men in order to their Spiritual Welfare, to confess their Sins to their Christian Brethren; and if it be so, I think it is not to be denied, but it is more expedient for them, to confess to those whose Office it is to Pray for them, and to Counsel them, and who have ministerial Authority from Christ to pronounce the Pardon and Absolution of true Penitents. But to proceed,

3. Having thus acquainted the Spiritual Guide with thy Desires, and having fully opened thyself unto him, set thyself to receive his Instructions; hear him, as thou wouldst hear Christ himself, whose Minister he is, speaking to thee; mark what he says with the greatest Care: If any Thing fall from him, which thou dost not fully

fully understand, desire him to explain his Meaning; if thou dost distrust thy Memory, his Instructions being many, desire him to repeat them: And when he hath made an End, give him, together with thy Thanks, thy Promise to follow his Directions; and so begging his Prayers, and his Blessing in the Name of Christ, take thy leave of him.

4. As soon as thou art gone from him, begin to recollect the good Advices thou hast received, and to Practice accordingly; and omit not the Doing of any Thing he hath advised thee to. If any Thing he hath advised thee to, seem hard, or without Reason, yet reject it not, but consider; That, though thou dost not perceive the Reason why he hath laid such Things upon thee, yet he may have seen good Reason for it; thou dost not know but it was to try the Sincerity of the Profession thou hast made to him, and to know the better how to fit himself to thy Necessities hereafter: Or it may be, he might (in Prudence) design that thou shouldst not understand the Reason of some particular Advices, till thou feelest the good Effect of them, and the great Advantages they bring thee, to dispose thee the more readily and cheerfully to follow him for the Future: For, finding great Benefit in that, in which thou couldst foresee none, as well as in that which did promise thee much, as thou canst not but think thyself happy in meeting with such a Guide, in Respect of that which is past; so thou canst not but be mightily encouraged by it, to give him the entire disposal of thee for the Time to come. Be careful then, to observe his Directions.

rections in every Thing: Remembring, that as a Sick Man can receive no Benefit by the best Physician in the World, how well soever he has made him to understand his Disease, if he puts up his Prescriptions in his Pocket, and makes no further Use of them; so the Advices of thy Guide (how good soever they may be in themselves) will be of no Advantage to thee, if thou dost not follow them: Nay, let me add, (which thou art concerned to remember) that thy Case will be much worse than the Case of such an imprudent Person: For, though he is not like to be benefited by the Prescriptions of his Physician, yet he can receive no hurt by his not using them; whereas thou wilt receive much Damage by neglecting those that have been given thee; for besides this, that all insincere dealing in Matters of Religion, and trifling in Holy Things, if I may so speak, does in itself tend to harden the Heart, and to make thee more regardless of the great Concerns of thy Soul; it will certainly provoke God to withdraw his Grace from thee, and to leave thee to fall into that Ruin and Destruction, which thou art but little afraid of, and takest no Care to avoid.

5. Return to thy Guide after some Time, and give him an impartial Account of the Use thou hast made of his Instructions, and the Benefit thou hast received by them; if thou hast failed in any Thing, confess it freely, and declare thy Resolution to do better for the Time to come; if thou canst say that thou hast failed in nothing, give God Thanks, and say as the young Man did to our Blessed Saviour, *Matth. 19.*

v. 20. *What lack I yet?* And then receive his Directions, as thou didst before, and take Care to practise accordingly.

6. Keep a constant Correspondence with him as long as thou livest; acquainting him from time to time, with the State and Condition of thy Soul, with thy Progress in Wisdom and Virtue, with thy Temptations and Discouragements, with thy Failings and Imperfections, with thy Doubts and Fears, with thy Joys and Sorrows, and undertake not any thing of Moment or Importance without his Advice and Approbation; thou wilt quickly be sensible of such Advantages by this Course, as will effectually encourage thee to proceed in it. I will not insist upon that Peace and Satisfaction which thou wilt constantly enjoy in thy own Mind by it, as having not only the Approbation of thy own Conscience in every thing thou dost, but also the Approbation of one of Christ's Ministers, who is better able to judge of thy Actions, and may be presumed to judge more impartially than thyself would do. It may suffice to mention some of those Services he will be continually doing thee; he will instruct thee in what thou art ignorant of, and will either prevent or rectify thy Mistakes; he will resolve thy Doubts, and remove thy Fears, and ease thee of thy Sorrows; he will restrain thee when thou art too zealous and forward, and quicken thee when thou art dull and slothful, and refresh and cheer thee when thou art weary; he will restore thee when thou art fallen, and apply the Promises of the Gospel to thee, and help thee to take Comfort in them; he will remove many Difficulties out of thy way, and arm thee against
Temp-

Temptations, and support thee under Tryals, and be both a Guide and a Guardian to thee in all the dangerous and troublesome Passages of thy Life; in a Word, he will make thee to understand thy Duty fully, to know what is necessary, and what is lawful, and what is expedient, and what is seasonable; and help thee to distinguish between Truth and Falshood, Reality and Appearance, Good and Evil; he will excite and stir up thy Will to embrace the one, and refuse the other; he will moderate thy Affections, and keep thy Passions in order, and preserve thee in an even, steady Course of Well-doing, and at last deliver thee up in Peace and Safety into the Hands of the great Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls, Christ Jesus.

Object. But it may be, thou wilt meet with some that will ask thee, What Necessity is there for all this? Why may it not be enough for thy Salvation, which is enough for the Salvation of most Men, who live and dye, and go to Heaven without all this Trouble, contenting themselves to have a Minister in their Parish, to hear him preach, and to receive the Sacrament from his Hands? without putting themselves or him to so much trouble concerning their Souls; if They may be saved without all this ado, Why mayst not Thou? It is not good to be singular, and they that teach Men to be so, are not their Friends.

Ans. To those Men, many Things may be replied, but it may suffice to offer these few Things to their Consideration. We do not take upon us to judge of the everlasting State of any;
we

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we leave that to be manifested in that Day, which shall bring to light the most hidden Things: We do not bind Men to take this Course upon Pain of everlasting Damnation: But surely, every Man is concerned to endeavour to save his own Soul; and, whether the best Way to do this, be to do as the most do, or to do as I have advised thee, do thou judge. Look into the World, and observe the daily Miscarriages of those Men, whose Practice thou art urged to approve and imitate. How many of them after many Years going to Church and hearing of Sermons, have no more Understanding in the very Principles of their Religion, than they had when they were Children; and of whom we may say as St. Paul did of some, *That they are ever learning, but never able to come to the Knowledge of the Truth,* 2 Tim. 3. v. 7. How many are puffed up with a great Opinion of their own Knowledge, that know nothing as they ought to know, and will never know any thing because those that should and would instruct them cannot know their Ignorance 'till it is too late to give them Instructions? How many of them become a Prey to Seducers, and drink in damnable Doctrines with as much Eagerness, as they should do the most saving Truths, meerly because they take upon them to judge of every thing, and will not take Advice of those whom God hath set over them to direct them? How many go groaning under the Burthen of troubled Consciences for many Years, and it may be after all, become desperate, and lay violent Hands upon themselves, because they would not discover their Grief

Grief to a spiritual Physician, who might have poured Wine and Oyl into their Wounds, and have bound them up to their everlasting Peace and Comfort? How many go on in an evil Course, who might be persuaded to leave it, but for some Prejudices which they have entertained either against a good Life in general, or some particular Duties, or against some Doctrine, which if received would work a Reformation in them; which Prejudices Christ's Ministers cannot remove, because they know them not? How many, in a Word, that mean well, and make many good Promises and Resolutions, are overcome by their Lusts, and the Temptations of the Devil and the World, meerly for want of particular Directions, as to those Lusts, and those Temptations? These sad Shipwracks, and many more which thou mayst daily behold, may convince thee how dangerous it is to go in the common Way, and how much safer it will be for thee to follow the Advice that I have given thee: And if Men will not be persuaded that it is their Duty to do thus, I am sure they may see that it is so much their Interest, that they cannot despise it without despising their own Souls. And as for the Imputation of Singularity, which thou mayst be threatned with, it is but what the best of Christ's Disciples have undergone in all Ages, and no good Christian will make any Reckoning of it: Were we to please Men, we should have Reason to dread it; but since our Business is to please God, and to save our Souls, it is no matter what they either say or think of us. Suppose, my Brother, that Christ had shewed himself as much concerned for the Health
of

of our Bodies, or the Increase of our Estates, as he hath done for the Salvation of our Souls; that he had appointed an Order of Men to teach us how to get Money, or to preserve our selves in Health and Strength for many Years; and had given them as strict a Charge to take Care of it, and be diligent in it, and had promised them as great Assistances to make their Cares and Endeavours effectual to these Ends, as he hath done to the appointed Guides of Souls; and that he had commanded all Men as strictly to respect them, as his Officers appointed to these Purposes; to follow their Directions, and submit themselves in all Things to them, as he has commanded Men to submit to their spiritual Guides: Supposing this, I say, dost thou think that Men would behave themselves in that Manner towards these good Friends of their Bodies, as they do to the great Friends and Guides of their Souls? Would they content themselves to hear them read once or twice a Week a publick Lecture of Physick or good Husbandry? No, no; we should see every Man running to their Houses, and desiring private Conversation with them: We should hear one saying, Sir, you take great Pains among us, and read very well and learnedly; but I am a poor ignorant Man, and understand but little, and remember less; and therefore I pray you to explain and repeat some of those good Things to me, which you speak in publick. And another we should hear complaining, that he could receive no Benefit by all his Pains, because his Discourses were not proper for his Case, and therefore, beseeching him to consider his particular Necessities and

and to give him Directions suitable thereunto, &c. This we may well suppose Men would do, from what we see them do now, when they need the Advice of Physicians, and of the Men of Skill in worldly Matters; and we may boldly say, that they would not spare (keeping still to the former Supposition) to make loud Outcries against the appointed Physicians, as being false to their Trust, in case they should refuse to hear them in private, and refer them to their publick Lectures. Now let any Man tell me, why Men do not take the same Course for their Souls, which they would take for their Bodies and Estates? Will they say, that their Souls have not so much Need of the Help of Christ's Ministers, as their Bodies have of the Help of Physicians; and that they know better how to secure their Spiritual and Eternal Welfare, than they do their Temporal? This would betray more stupid Ignorance, or devilish Pride and Self-conceit, than they will be willing to discover. Will they say, that the Ministers may understand the particular Necessities of every Person, and provide for them, without their taking the Course prescribed; and that they may suit their publick Instructions, Exhortations, and Directions to all Mens Capacities, how different soever they are? This will be to make them more than Prophets, to ascribe a Kind of Omniscience to them, yea, and an Omnipotence too; to make their Sermons, as God is said by some to have made the *Manna* in the Wilderness, agreeable to the Taste of every one; which I suppose no Man in his Wits will do. What then is the Reason of it? For my Part, I can give

give no other than this, that either they are grossly ignorant, and little better than Beasts in Understanding, or meer Infidels under the Name of Christians; or if they do in some sort believe the Gospel, yet their Hearts are so engaged to the World, that they cannot have any serious and constant Regard to their immortal Souls.

But to put an End to this Matter, let the Cause of the Common Practice be good or bad, I am sure the Effects of it are sad and lamentable; the great Decay of Christian Piety among us, the great Increase of all Manner of Wickedness, the Multiplying of Errors, Schisms, and Divisions, hath no one more visible Cause than this; and till Men be convinced that they owe a greater Respect to their spiritual Guides, than their Practice carries in it, and will be persuaded to follow the Advice I have now given them, I cannot hope to see any Stop put to these Evils. I beseech thee therefore, my Brother, by all that is dear to thee, not to despise my Counsel. Defer not to make choice of a Guide; and when thou hast done, so be not slack to desire his Advice, nor backward to follow it; thou mayst be confident of the Blessing of God in so doing. Thy Guide is particularly concerned to give thee the best Advice he can; and God is concerned to make it effectual for thy Good, since he hath particularly ordained it for that End.

To these Directions I might add many more, viz.

That

That thou wilt do well to endear thyself to thy Guide as much as thou canst, that he may take the greater Care of thee, and be more ardently desirous of thy Salvation; to which Purpose thou mayst do well to shew thy Esteem of

him, by a respectful Carriage before others. There was a great and good

Mons. de Renty. Man once in the World, that would

never take place of a Priest before the People, the Dignity of the Office requiring, as he believed, and deserving the highest Respect; and if any one say, that he was not of our Church; I answer, the greater Reason have most of us to be ashamed of our selves, who call our selves Reformed, and do worse. And further, thou mayst do well to contribute cheerfully, according to thy Ability, towards his Maintenance, if he be not plentifully provided for. The *Primitive* Christians were not backward to do this; as thou mayst perceive by their devoting all that they had, to the Service of Christ and his Church, *Acts* 4. v. 34, 35. And I wish I could not say, that the Sacriledge of many that call themselves Christians in this Age, did not make it in some sort necessary for good Christians to do the same now.

That thou must keep close to thy Guide as long as thou livest, and never change him, if God's Providence doth not constrain thee.

That in all thy Intercourse with thy Guide, thou must look beyond him, viz. to thy God, whose Minister he is, and who guides and blesses thee by his Ministry, to whom thou must daily address thyself by Prayer for a Blessing upon his

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Endeavours, and to whose Goodness and Mercy thou must daily ascribe all the Benefit thou dost receive by them. But I must forbear, having too far exceeded my Bounds already. I conclude all with the Words of our dear Lord and Saviour; *Now thou knowest these things, happy art thou if thou dost them, John 13. v. 17.*

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